

# Seven Times Around a City: The Evolution of Israeli Operational Art in Urban Operations

A Monograph

by

MAJ Wesley A. Moerbe  
United States Army



School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Wesley A. Moerbe

Monograph Title: Seven Times Around a City: The Evolution of Israeli Operational Art in Urban Operations

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Monograph Director  
Alice A. Butler-Smith, PhD

\_\_\_\_\_, Seminar Leader  
Charles T. Lombardo, COL

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies  
Henry A. Arnold III, COL

Accepted this 10th day of May 2016 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, PhD

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## **Abstract**

Seven Times Around a City: The Evolution of Israeli Operational Art in Urban Operations, by MAJ Wesley A. Moerbe, 87 pages.

The nature of a city's organized space and the resulting dynamism create difficulties for a commander striving to maintain control of forces and respond intelligently to threats. Coming to grips with this is difficult, but can be done as the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) demonstrated. The IDF have consistently faced these challenges more than any other western-style military. They have struggled with the dilemma of preparing for state-centric maneuver war while remaining ready for asymmetric non-state forces in an urban environment. By tracing the evolution of the IDF's operational art in urban warfare, military planners have a vital reference point for how western militaries have responded to these challenges.

From the 1982 siege of Beirut, to the recent forays into the Gaza Strip, the IDF engaged in a series of urban campaigns against asymmetric adversaries who adapted rapidly and exploited the urban environment to their advantage. The study evaluates the changing IDF understanding of a city's physical space, how it contests the information domain, and its operations process over time. Ultimately, it finds that the IDF developed the boldness to re-image the space of a cityscape, to contest their adversary's hold on global audiences, and to learn as they fight.

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## **Acronyms**

IDF	Israeli Defense Force
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PA	Palestinian Authority



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## Introduction

And the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets.

—Joshua 6:4

Wherever humans settle, war follows, and so it goes with urban warfare. One of the earliest known narratives of urban warfare comes to us from the Old Testament and describes the siege of Jericho, part of Joshua's campaign to establish a kingdom in the Promised Land. Taken literally, the Israelites compassed Jericho's walls seven times, and to reward their obedience, God brought its battlements low by divine power.<sup>1</sup> The preferred rational explanation posits that Joshua confused and lulled the besieged into complacency by marching around the city in the same way for six days, always punctuated with a blast from the shofar (traditional ceremonial Jewish ram's horn). On the seventh day, assured that the defenders saw no threat in these actions, Joshua again marched his force around the city, and following the customary blast from the shofar, initiated assault upon the city with a battle cry. The unprepared defenders' walls were penetrated and crumpled into dust.<sup>2</sup> Either way, it seems a rather unconventional methodology.

The modern Jewish state again finds itself fighting in cities and although urban warfare appears different now than it did to Joshua, the same basic challenges of asymmetry remain as they have since antiquity. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) defends an ancient nation, but a young state. The Israeli identity is at once modern and ancient and there exists a tension between conservatism and progressive attitudes that affects the manner in which the IDF confronts the

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua 6:4.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Gabriel, *The Military History of Ancient Israel* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 131.

changing world.<sup>3</sup> In the urban battlefield, which more and more frequently sets the stage for Israeli operations, the IDF has faced substantial change in a relatively short period. From its 1982 war in Lebanon to the present, its enemies have adapted themselves to the vulnerabilities of modern state armies by reinventing themselves.<sup>4</sup> Not without struggle, the IDF realized the aggressive pace of change and has come to grips with it. It came at a cost, but the IDF have developed the boldness to re-imagine the space of a cityscape, to seek opportunity rather than fear its environs, to consider action systemically, to learn as they fight, and to contest their adversaries' hold on global audiences. They have learned that to win in the city, you must sometimes march around it.

#### Ubiquity of the Urban Challenge

The world's cities, simultaneously a source of human creativity and depravity are now, and will continue to be the most challenging battlefields a military can face. Already, they contain the majority of the planet's population and will add to that over the next few decades.<sup>5</sup> It is not merely the size, density, or civilian population of cities that create such difficult military problems. The pairing of complex human relationships with the changing, artificial environment makes fighting in cities incredibly challenging. As the physical product of social forces, cities

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<sup>3</sup> Sergio Catignani, *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas: Dilemmas of a Conventional Army* (London: Routledge, 2008), 157.

<sup>4</sup> Samy Cohen, *Israel's Asymmetric Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 52; Yehezkel Dror, *Israeli Statecraft: National Security Challenges and Responses* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 60-66.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision [Highlights]* (New York: United Nations, 2014), accessed 31 March 2016, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Publications/Files/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf>, 13.

change and may be changed to suit military necessity in ways that environments do not.<sup>6</sup> They challenge human cognition with their possibilities both tangible and intangible. This can frustrate strategic objectives and threaten the logic of tactical actions.

The Israeli Defense Force faces this complex, and urban challenge almost daily. Since the founding of the modern state of Israel, the IDF have fought major and minor combat actions without cessation. Even now, the possibility of a third major Palestinian uprising appears high, if it is not already underway.<sup>7</sup> Uprisings and terrorist threats have frequently drawn the IDF into the urban arenas of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Gaza City, and portions of West Bank over the last three decades. Because of the great difficulty of military operations in urban terrain, operational art becomes all the more important. Constantly changing human and physical environments work against coherence between strategy and tactics. Because the IDF engages in a ceaseless struggle for security of Israeli and Palestinian urban centers, they serve as a living laboratory for those who study and prepare for the wars of the future.

The nature of these trends in warfare mirror the US Army's view of itself and its own adversaries.<sup>8</sup> Given such challenges, it can be instructive to understand how an experienced force plans for and adjusts to these difficulties. The purpose of this research is to reveal the evolution of Israeli operational art in the urban environment. It will grow apparent that a creative approach to

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<sup>6</sup> Roger Spiller, *Sharp Corners Urban Operations at Century's End* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2001), 6.

<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey Goldberg, "The Paranoid, Supremacist Roots of the Stabbing Intifada," *The Atlantic*, 16 October 2015, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/10/the-roots-of-the-palestinian-uprising-against-israel/410944/>.

<sup>8</sup> Richard M. Swain, Donald L. Gilmore, and Carolyn D. Conway, eds., *Selected Papers of General William E. DePuy: First Commander, U.S. Army, Training and Doctrine Command, 1 July 1973* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1994), x.

urban spaces, careful attention to the less tangible aspects of warfare, and an operations process that fosters learning and adaptation separate successful urban warriors from those who struggle.

The Israeli experience in the asymmetric urban environment really began in earnest during the First Lebanon War.<sup>9</sup> It is here that this survey begins, examining operations in Beirut during Operation Peace for Galilee before proceeding to the recent Gaza Campaigns, Operations Cast Lead and Protective Edge. Throughout, it will analyze the gradual development of the IDF's operational art in the urban environment.

#### Limitations and Benefits of Non-native Research

Few conflicts have the power to divide and impassion people as the Israeli-Arab conflict. Often the most scathing criticism of Israel and its security apparatus comes from within the state of Israel. Moreover, the Arab world does not stand united against Israel.<sup>10</sup> Not even the Palestinian people are unified. Infighting led to factionalism and power struggles within the Palestinian cause itself.<sup>11</sup> A widely accepted narrative of this struggle tends to depict the Israelis as aggressive neo-colonialists and the Palestinians as hapless victims. Another frames the Israelis as merely defending their ancestral home against terrorists.<sup>12</sup> Wherever a researcher's sympathy may lie, the pursuit of truth can run afoul of bias over such a complicated conflict. Here, the

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<sup>9</sup> Chaim Herzog and Shlomo Gazit, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East from the 1948 War of Independence to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005), 373-376.

<sup>10</sup> David Rodman, "Regime-Targeting: A Strategy for Israel," in *Between War and Peace: Dilemmas of Israeli Security*, edited by Efraim Karsch (Portland, OR: F. Cass, 1996), 162-163.

<sup>11</sup> Shlomo Gazit, *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in the Territories* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 306.

<sup>12</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History's Double Helix* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 1-18.

researcher must acknowledge that lingual limitations give only a glimpse of the series of Arab-Israeli wars. Without a scholarly grip on Hebrew, one lacks the insight provided by professional journals and Israeli papers that do not print English editions. In the absence of advanced Arabic skills, one cannot access most Arab newspapers. Moreover, far more Hebrew source material tends to be translated to English, and Arabic translation lags behind making intellectual currents of the Arab world difficult to penetrate.<sup>13</sup>

Several other constraints, specific to the IDF and the contemporary environment limit the author's scope of research. The IDF, unlike the US Army keeps much of its doctrinal documents classified.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the contemporary nature of the Gaza Campaigns makes researching them difficult. Participating officers remain in service, which limits the opportunity to write about these topics. Historians, who benefit from the perspective of hindsight, need more time to document the Gaza Wars. In all earnest, these conflicts have not necessarily reached a conclusion.

These challenges create blind spots for a researcher who lacks the native knowledge of an Israeli or Arab yet also free him from a certain bias. Viewing the IDF as an external critic keeps pride out of the assessment. Detachment from the Israeli or Palestinian narrative permits a more objective analysis of their military performance. Realizing the limitations of available literature on the IDF it remains to survey the available scholarship and giving meaning to it.

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<sup>13</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Regional Bureau for Arab States, *The Arab Human Development Report 2003: Building a Knowledge Society* (Amman, Jordan: National Press, 2003), accessed 31 March 2016, <http://www.arab-hdr.org/publications/other/ahdr/ahdr2003e.pdf>, 3.

<sup>14</sup> Shmuel Even, "The IDF Strategy and the Responsibility of the Political Leadership," *INSS Insight*, no. 736 (19 August 2015): 1, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=10366>.

## Literature Review

The contours of IDF scholarship reveal much about the service and its leaders, although certain gaps remain. Scholarship on the IDF generally falls into one of a few categories; studies of particular wars or campaigns, biographies about a personality in the defense or political establishment, institutional history that spans several conflicts, or study of a specific genre of warfare like asymmetric warfare. Although given some indirect attention, a close examination of Israeli urban warfare remains largely absent from scholarship. As this survey demonstrates, no single product addresses the evolution of Israeli urban warfare over time.

When reviewing campaign studies, Trevor Dupuy's *Flawed Victory* as well as Richard Gabriel's *Operation Peace for Galilee* make an excellent foundation for understanding the First Lebanon War.<sup>15</sup> Adding a military practitioner's view to these, M. Thomas Davis's *40 KM into Lebanon: Israel's 1982 Invasion* evaluates the campaign through the lens of Clausewitz. Co-written by a journalist and a former spokesman for the IDF during the war, *Fire in Beirut* offers a third and distinct insider's view.<sup>16</sup>

In historian's terms, the Gaza Campaigns concluded only recently. Scholarship on these conflicts exists primarily in the form of research reports, essays, and white papers. Anthony Cordesman, *The Gaza War: A Strategic Analysis*, and Russell Glenn, *Glory Restored*, represent the current authoritative accounts of Operation Cast Lead while *Hard Fighting* and *Back to Basics* each evaluate and compare Operation Cast Lead to the Second Lebanon War.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee: The Israeli-PLO War in Lebanon* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984); Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martell, *Flawed Victory: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War in Lebanon* (Fairfax, VA.: Hero Books, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> M. Thomas Davis, *40 km into Lebanon: Israel's 1982 Invasion* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *The "Gaza War": A Strategic Analysis* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009); Russell W. Glenn, *Glory Restored? The*

Even more scarce are sources for the 2014 Operation Protective Edge. The Israeli government and think tanks produced *The Gaza War 2014* and *The Lessons of Protective Edge* respectively.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, the former served a purpose for the state and the latter for the defense establishment. These studies could be balanced however with research documents produced by a wide array of officers from around the world who prepared, *2014 Gaza War Assessment: The New Face of Conflict* and *An Assessment of the 2014 Gaza Conflict*.<sup>19</sup>

Biographies and personality studies provided insight into the decision maker's thought and planning process, but most, like Yehuda Avner's *The Prime Minister's* focused on senior political leadership and could not capture operational level planning.<sup>20</sup> Ariel Sharon's *Warrior* and Elazar Stern's *Struggling Over Israel's Soul* serve as exceptions, but they were not intended to evaluate the operations process in urban warfare and only obliquely regard that topic.<sup>21</sup>

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*Implications of the 2008-2009 Gaza War* (Norfolk, VA: US Joint Forces Command and Joint Irregular Warfare Center, 2010); David E. Johnson, *Hard Fighting: Israel in Lebanon and Gaza* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012); Scott C. Farquhar, Matt M. Matthews, Penny L. Mellies, Abe F. Marrero, and Michael D. Snyder, *Back to Basics: A Study of the Second Lebanon War and Operation CAST LEAD* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Hirsh Goodman and Dore Gold, *The Gaza War 2014: The War Israel Did Not Want and the Disaster it Averted* (Jerusalem, Israel: Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2015); Anat Kurz and Shlomo Brom, eds., *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge* (Tel Aviv, Israel: The Institute for National Security Studies, November 2014), accessed 31 March 2016, [http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/ZukEtanENG\\_final.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/ZukEtanENG_final.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> High Level Military Group, *An Assessment of the 2014 Gaza Conflict* (Madrid, Spain: Friends of Israel Initiative, 2015), accessed 31 March 2016, <http://www.high-level-military-group.org/pdf/hlmg-assessment-2014-gaza-conflict.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Yehuda Avner, *The Prime Ministers: An Intimate Narrative of Israeli Leadership* (New Milford, CT: Toby Press, 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Ariel Sharon and David Chanoff, *Warrior: The Autobiography of Ariel Sharon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989); Elazar Stern, *Struggling Over Israel's Soul: An IDF General Speaks of His Controversial Moral Decisions* (New York: Gefen Publishing House, 2012).



*The Sword and the Olive* provides a limited institutional history of the IDF. Van Creveld focuses primarily on the roots of the IDF, its golden age from 1956 to 1973, and what he views as a loss of quality in IDF due to the corrupting influences of the First Intifada.<sup>22</sup> Van Creveld hardly touches on the urban aspects of the Lebanon War and pines for the days of mobile warfare when the IDF's reputation stood at its highest point. In his coverage of the Lebanon War, the siege of Beirut hardly figures into the narrative. *Israel and Its Army*, by Stuart Cohen, picks up chronologically where Van Creveld leaves off, but studies the relationship between the IDF and Israeli society.<sup>23</sup> Unconcerned with warfighting, Cohen emphasizes social and institutional shifts in the IDF over the course of the last three decades.

In *Israel's Asymmetric Wars*, Samy Cohen focuses on the intifadas and limits his research to answering questions about proportionality and effectiveness of IDF conventional forces against non-state adversaries.<sup>24</sup> It offers insight into policy and strategic concepts which animated IDF planning and operations, but generally ignored the effects of urban terrain upon the IDF or their adversaries. Sergio Catignani's *Israeli Counter-Insurgency and the Intifadas*, comes closest to assessing IDF operational change in the urban environment, but limits its scope to the intifadas.<sup>25</sup>

Other remarkable works include *Rethinking Contemporary Warfare* and *Transforming Command*.<sup>26</sup> The former, written by IDF sociologists and psychologists, unraveled the IDF's

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<sup>22</sup> Martin Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Stuart Cohen, *Israel and its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion* (London: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Samy Cohen.

<sup>25</sup> Catignani.

<sup>26</sup> Eyal Ben-Ari, Zeev Lerer, Uzi Ben-Shalom, Ariel Vainer, *Rethinking Contemporary Warfare: A Sociological View of the Al-Aqsa Intifada* (Albany: State University of New York

organizational changes in response to asymmetric warfare and questioned traditional views on the nature of unit cohesion on the battlefield. The latter traced the Israeli operations process and command and control apparatus through the last several decades of conflict to the present.

Ultimately, each of these categories of scholarship contributes indirectly to understanding the Israeli approach to urban warfare. Of themselves, none directly addresses Israel's urban warfare practices or their adaptation over time, but taken as a whole, a certain image of the Israeli experience and patterns of thought about urban warfare began to take shape. From the First Lebanon War to the present, these works depict an IDF grappling with certain fundamental questions in succession. What defines the identity of the IDF? Does urban-centered warfare represent the future of operational challenges? How do state militaries adapt to deal with this asymmetric urban threat? Can a state prepare its army able to respond to both conventional and non-conventional threats simultaneously? Can we retain our values and defeat our adversaries? The challenge of responding to these questions prompted broader question this seeks to answer: How did the IDF evolve in response to the growing challenge of urban-centered warfare in the last three decades? To this end, the remainder of this monograph directs its attention.

### **Understanding Urban Conflict and Evaluating the Military Response**

To sharpen understanding of the Israeli experience with urban conflict, it bears lingering a moment on the question: what is it about urban environments that make the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose to achieve strategic objectives different than in other environments? Rather than reviewing the well-documented tactical challenges of urban conflict, the focus here shall be on its operational aspects. The operational effects upon a military force relate primarily to the unique nature of space and dynamism in urban environments. Ultimately,

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Press, 2010); Eitan Shamir, *Transforming Command the Pursuit of Mission Command in the U.S., British, and Israeli Armies* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

these factors drive the way an effective military force responds to the challenge of urban operations and provide the rationale for assessing them.

### Uniquely Human Organized Space

Although it defies sharply drawn definitions, most urbanologists would agree that density of settlement and activity is the primary characteristic for what one considers urban area. It is a place where “a certain energized crowding of people takes place.”<sup>27</sup> The earliest versions of urban areas all served the same purpose. They enclosed. In such enclosures, humans could find a measure of protection and a means of organizing activity to increase odds of survival.<sup>28</sup> In the present age, most humans do not live so close to the margin of survival any more, but settlements and cities still provide the same broad function. Therefore, in urban areas, space is relatively well organized compared to non-urban terrain. However, this organization may be illegible to any but the residents of the space or its immediate environs making travel through it disorienting and combat chaotic.<sup>29</sup> Organization need not imply simplicity in the city.

The various enclosures inside the urban area can be utilized for a variety of purposes and specialized functions. This reduces the predictability of movement in urban space as it can take on a number of shapes and forms challenging any but a resident to visualize and conduct goal-oriented activities. In addition, the human development of space in cities, its expansion upward into buildings and downward into subterranean tunnels also creates a greater possible volume

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<sup>27</sup> Spiro Kostof and Richard Tobias, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings through History* (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2012), 37.

<sup>28</sup> Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1961), 9.

<sup>29</sup> Spiller, 6.

than the equivalent square mile of undeveloped terrain. They have a larger usable surface area and therefore absorb larger numbers of people and their tools.

Virtual space augments the tactile city spaces that one can see and touch. Few people able to access the internet or wireless networks live their lives entirely in the physical world.

Technology begets an artificial domain where an altogether different field of battle exists. Every settlement has a corresponding virtual space without boundaries and populated by anyone on the planet wishing to be there. Moreover, the rules that govern physical space do not apply in this artificial domain, whose emerging rules and norms challenge cognition and the laws humans develop to order their lives. Paul Virilio, notable urbanologist and philosopher makes the point well, writing that the internet comprised, “a constructed space” in which the distinction between “near and far” no longer exists.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, urban space is essentially human and the focal point for economic, political, and social activity benefitting from economies of scale and developed infrastructure.<sup>31</sup> Often, if not always, overlapping civilian and military activity bring the two into closer proximity and create opportunities and risks in asymmetric conflicts.<sup>32</sup> The high density of humans and their tendency to modify their settlements, gives rise to the next major characteristic of urban areas, dynamism.

#### The Dynamism of Urban Space

On campaign, the climate may change and to some extent, the environment responds to climatic changes, but short of certain specific engineering endeavors, the world outside of towns

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<sup>30</sup> Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 6.

<sup>31</sup> Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City* (London: Macmillan, 2011), 6.

<sup>32</sup> William Glenn Robertson and Lawrence A. Yates, *Block by Block: The Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003), 10.

and cities remains relatively static. Mountains hold their positions and rivers remain in their course changing only over a period of hundreds if not thousands of years. In the urban environment however, interaction between the belligerents, non-combatants, and the environment generate near constant change.<sup>33</sup> There is, as architect Keith Lynch says, “no final result, only a continuous succession of phases.”<sup>34</sup> Uniquely constructed to enable such transactions city streets and buildings act as organs of a circulatory system. Like the human body, such a system adapts to circumstances. Buildings collapse, while others are built. Human mobs protest and demonstrate closing public areas but emptying others. Police and sometimes civilians, erect barricades or tear them down. They dig tunnels or carve streets in response to local conditions. Indeed, urbanologists and military planners alike have applied the metaphor of organic metabolism onto cities to great effect.<sup>35</sup> The fact of human existence in urban areas whether rival military forces or civilians trying to get on with life means that humans can and will change the structure and composition of the city both visibly and in more intangible ways.

Because of the “heightened tempo of human intercourse,” of urban environments, change occurs at a brisk pace in most social enterprises, war included.<sup>36</sup> The networked adversary assesses an attacker and prepares new and more vicious means of resistance. Such rapid adaptation confuses the best-laid plans. On the acceleration of social process, Virilio remarked,

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<sup>33</sup> Michael Evans, *City without Joy: Urban Military Operations into the 21st Century* (Canberra, ACT: Australian Defence College, 2007), accessed 12 January 2016, <http://www.defence.gov.au/adcdocs/Publications/Occasional%20Papers/Occasional%20Series%20No2.pdf>, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960), 2.

<sup>35</sup> Vanessa Castan Broto, Adriana Allen, and Elizabeth Rapoport, “Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Urban Metabolism,” *JIEC Journal of Industrial Ecology* 16, no. 6 (2012): 851-861.

<sup>36</sup> Mumford, 569.

“with politics occurring through media and information circuits, the time of deliberation and consensus is obliterated.”<sup>37</sup>

### The Manifold Operational Effects of Organized Space and Dynamism

The unique character of urban space has implications for the spatial aspects of operational art. The city’s enclosures and compartments by their nature splinter large formations. They, in effect, fragment military activity and as a consequence complicate efforts to maintain control over it.<sup>38</sup> This puts the operational artist in a position of disadvantage when trying to achieve the military principle of mass in the traditional sense.<sup>39</sup> The difficulty in generalizing about the space makes setting objectives perilous and setbacks or game changing developments likely. A line of operations can quickly be lost in the snarl of dense cityscapes, especially in the informal settlements that form at the peripheries. Literal and figurative blind alleys can frustrate well-equipped forces with good intelligence, making tempo and phasing an educated guess at best. The ability of an urban area to absorb large numbers of combatants can force culmination and limit operational reach. The potential human costs frustrate calculation of risk and even basing in urban zones rapidly consumes human and material assets. The multi-dimensionality of urban space, which includes artificial space, makes identifying a center of gravity or decisive points challenging. People need not be in the city’s physical space to affect it. The source of power for an adversary may not be something that a munition can weaken or destroy.<sup>40</sup> Lines of

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<sup>37</sup> Armitage, John. *Paul Virilio: From Modernism to Hypermodernism and Beyond* (London: SAGE, 2000), 105.

<sup>38</sup> Gal Hirsch, “On Dinosaurs and Hornets,” *RUSI Journal* 148, no. 4 (August 2003): 61.

<sup>39</sup> Evans, 8.

<sup>40</sup> David Kilcullen, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 171.

effort can lose their focus in the diffuse and dizzying range of social networks that develop in urban areas.

Finally, the shared space creates a more urgent challenge regarding Laws of Armed Conflict, humanitarian law, national values, and civilian-military relationships.<sup>41</sup> Clever adversaries employ the respect for law and human dignity of liberal democracies as weapons, deliberately making target discrimination difficult to impossible. Lawfare foils modern state armies whose enemies mock modern legal institutions by turning them against the state, while non-state forces evade unanimous condemnation.<sup>42</sup> With the confusing status of these urban battlefields and the comingling of civilian and armed groups, policing and soldiering become hard to distinguish. The subsequent blurring of police and military functions creates challenges and is alarming to many urbanologists.<sup>43</sup>

The dynamism of urban areas has profound effects on temporal aspects of military operations as well.<sup>44</sup> With the pace of operational intercourse running more quickly, adversaries may adapt more rapidly. Realistic expectations regarding end state and conditions become difficult to form when the environment and the adversary adapt so rapidly. Operational tempo, a tenet of offensive operations, grows more difficult to maintain when the adversary can respond to

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<sup>41</sup> Alan Weinraub, “The Evolution of Israeli Civil-Military Relations: Domestic Enablers and the Quest for Security” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2009), 69-71; Sean Watts, “Under Siege: International Humanitarian Law and Security Council Practice Concerning Urban Siege Operations” (Research and Policy Paper, Counterterrorism and Humanitarian Engagement Project, Harvard Law School-Brookings Project on Law and Security, Cambridge, MA, May 2014), accessed 2 April 2016, <http://blogs.harvard.edu/cheproject/files/2013/10/CHE-Project-IHL-and-SC-Practice-concerning-Urban-Siege-Operations.pdf>, 2-4.

<sup>42</sup> Dror, 115.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2010), 21.

<sup>44</sup> Spiller, 107.

circumstances so quickly.<sup>45</sup> The greatest challenge in urban operations may be the ability of military forces to perceive change and respond intelligently with relevant solutions.<sup>46</sup>

#### Assessing Response and Adaptation to Urban Warfare

The consequences of these operational effects are to place an incredible burden on modern state militaries wishing to achieve strategic objectives while maintaining the liberal democratic character of their polity, and respecting international norms. In order to trace the trajectory of Israeli operational art among cities and to assess its efficacy, evaluation criteria must reflect how well the IDF responds to such operational effects taking into account human organized space and dynamism.

Based on these urban characteristics and operational effects, the evaluation of the IDF's urban operational art may be distilled to three primary lines of inquiry augmented by several branch questions. First, how does the IDF perceive and react to the physical space of cities. How does the IDF view the compartmentalizing, the multi-dimensionality, and the increased volume? Second, how does the IDF perceive and respond to the intangible domains of urban warfare? To what extent and by what means do they plan for and contest adversaries in this abstract realm? Lastly, one needs to consider the cognitive framework of military problem solving employed; something known to the US Army as the operations process. How do the IDF understand problems and implement solutions in such a complex and dynamic environment? How do they learn? How does the IDF think about thinking? By design, these lines of inquiry and their auxiliary questions probe at the unique characteristics of urban space and dynamism, their operational effects on the IDF, and the IDF's response to them.

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<sup>45</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-06, *Urban Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 3-3, 7-5.

<sup>46</sup> Evans, 27.



Inevitably, there will be overlap in these lines of inquiry. Assuming urban conflict represents a complex adaptive ecology, the physical environment, the intangible domain, and the problem-solving approach will come together in ways difficult to predict. For example, actions in the physical environment like the staging of civilian casualties feed narratives in the intangible domain through social media. An operations process must predict and plan for such an eventuality to mitigate or even take advantage of these acts that unfold in both the physical and cognitive domains. Therefore, in the course of evaluation one must be prepared to veer into adjacent and connected lines of inquiry.

An assessment of the IDF should proceed from a firm footing in the Israeli context. Understanding the unique Israeli context provides insight into their propensity to act in a certain way, and helps refine questions along these lines of inquiry.<sup>47</sup> It may also prevent one from reaching erroneous conclusions on the applicability of Israeli answers to US Army challenges.

### **The IDF Context**

The IDF's ability to adapt to urban-centric warfare, the willingness to adapt, and the form that adaptation takes can only be explained as it relates to the unique context of the Israeli people. If there are lessons for other militaries to learn from the IDF experience, they must be examined in full light of these contextual considerations. A number of social, political, historical, and religious forces establish the structural constraints and human propensity to respond to urban warfare as the Israelis have since 1982. Effective operational approaches for the IDF may be military disasters for the US Army and vice versa. It merits pausing to consider these factors and to appreciate what is distinctly Israeli in their character.

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<sup>47</sup> Here, one leans on Julien's ideas about the inherent potential of something, in this case the IDF, based on the forces and circumstances that shaped and formed it. Francois Jullien, *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 16.

## Identity, Consensus, and the Jewish State: The Big Question

Capturing a dilemma well known to the Israelis but overlooked in western appraisals of Israel, Yehezkel Dror writes, “The vast majority of secular and religious Jews in Israel and practically all the statecraft elite agree that Israel should be a ‘Jewish state;’ however, they disagree on what this means. There is a tension between the desire to be a Jewish state on the one hand and to be a ‘normal’ state in the Western sense on the other.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, for many in Israel if not most, questions of strategic importance depend upon how one interprets what it means to be Jewish—and therefore, also, a Jewish state.

Perennial questions about the purpose of the military, its force structure and ethics, law and civil-military relations, ultimately derive from how the policy and military decision-makers respond to the question: what does it mean to be a Jewish state. The answer remains nearly unfathomable to non-Israelis and obscure to Israeli citizens. Perhaps this explains why the Israeli state does not have a written constitution in the American sense. Ben-Gurion and the founding members of Israeli struggled to wring consensus enough to ratify such a document, and left it to future generations to complete.<sup>49</sup> Values are intimately interconnected with identity. States define interests based on the self-perception of its values, and those values establish limits on military force helping define the virtues of the idealized individual in the profession and of the group itself.<sup>50</sup> Retired General Elazar Stern exemplified these choices in his year and a half long struggle to reach consensus on an updated code of ethics for the IDF called the Spirit of the IDF

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<sup>48</sup> Dror, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *The Constitution of the State of Israel*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/articles/const-intro-93.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Dror, 22.

and from which the idea “Purity of Arms” is drawn.<sup>51</sup> Each word drew criticism and debate until the final product could be agreed to be fit for all members of the IDF; secular, observant, or Arab.<sup>52</sup> Such a debate suggests the struggle of the Israelis to tailor a state army fit for the moral brambles of fighting asymmetric adversaries. There in the gray areas of terrorism and guerilla combat, enemies wish to turn Israeli values against them or worse, to corrupt them by luring them into unmitigated savagery.<sup>53</sup> However, when the nature of Jewishness remains an answer without consensus, the IDF’s job becomes more challenging. Therefore, strategic and operational trends and developments interrelate to the challenging issue of identity.

#### Love for an Indefensible Land

The land of Israel whose ancient and biblical boundaries are themselves subject to endless debate create a strategic challenge as well as a perennial sense of urgency for the Israeli political-military apparatus. First, many Arabs view the state of Israel as an obstacle to the homogeneity of Arab culture in Arab lands as well as a threat to the realization of a future (or present) caliphate, an obligatory effort for the Muslim polity.<sup>54</sup> Thus, cultural and theological factors make Israel a problem for much of the Arab street even if their political leaders are moderate or pragmatic enough to accept the presence of a Jewish state in Muslim lands. The

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<sup>51</sup> Stern, 197.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Van Creveld speaks to this in his chapters about the First Intifada noting that an army will eventually come to resemble its adversary, an especially tragic outcome if that adversary opposes the values of one’s people. Van Creveld, 352.

<sup>54</sup> Yehoshafat Harkabi, “The Meaning of a Democratic Palestinian State,” in *The Arab-Israeli Reader* edited by Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (New York: Penguin, 2008), 183.

Koran clearly identifies the inferior status of the Jewish people and identifies them as a threat to be “humbled” and speaks to their required subservience to Muslim rulership.<sup>55</sup>

A second and more rational concern is the defensibility of Israel in modern warfare against a conventionally equipped force. The lack of strategic depth and the potential for any successful attack to end with enemy flags over Jerusalem, firmly and irrevocably shaped Israeli military thought to treat any battle as possibly the last.<sup>56</sup> This philosophy profoundly influenced how the Israelis fought its early wars and prepared for future warfare.

#### The Weight of History on the IDF Character

The character of the early Israeli wars shaped the ethos, structure, and operating concept of the IDF up to the present. They evolved from a potent group of militias such the Palmach and Haganah, to become the premier maneuver warfare army in the Middle East in a few short years. They became, much like Frederick’s Prussian state, small and surrounded by adversaries and therefore evolved to fight brief wars of annihilation, rarely straying far from its recognized borders.<sup>57</sup> Israeli wars also tended to be limited by an expectation of the intervention of global powers such as the United States and Soviet Union. Captured territory served the purpose of political bargaining chips.<sup>58</sup> These conditions led the IDF to develop into the masters of mobile

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<sup>55</sup> Ahmad Ibn al-Naqib, Ibn al-Naqib, and Noah Ha Mim Keller, *Reliance of the Traveller: The Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law Umdat Al-Salik* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1999), 602.

<sup>56</sup> Van Creveld, 105.

<sup>57</sup> Robert Michael Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 153.

<sup>58</sup> Van Creveld, 106.

warfare for decades. Even in their darkest hour, during the Yom Kippur War, the IDF's tactical excellence allowed it to recover from serious lapses in intelligence and preparedness.

Such a legacy also established patterns of thought in force structuring and doctrinal development that inhibited adaptation to the trends of contemporary warfare. The cult of blitzkrieg led by armored formations persisted after that age had passed. Urban-based guerillas and terrorists emerged as threats where slashing columns of armor could not deliver a decision.<sup>59</sup>

Israel's near constant state of conflict groomed its officers in the crucible of combat and imparted valuable experience and practical knowledge. As a practical matter, the opportunity to pursue advanced education took a backseat to the nation's defense. An ethos of bitsuism, literally "doing," took hold in the IDF, privileging experience-based intuition over theory.<sup>60</sup> It provides the logic behind the alleged IDF disdain for intellectualism.<sup>61</sup> This criticism might falsely imply that the IDF officer lacks interest in education. Many do, but they tend to be rewarded more for practical experience, perhaps as a result of the bitsuism culture, as well as the fact that officers are all one time enlisted soldiers, reinforcing the emphasis on experience-based improvisation.<sup>62</sup>

The IDF maintains a somewhat individualized, improvisation-based culture viewing doctrine with skepticism. Moreover, most strategic and doctrinal documents remain classified and

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<sup>59</sup> Shimon Naveh, *Operational Art and the IDF: A Critical Study of a Command Culture*, (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, 2007), 76; Shimon Naveh, "The Cult of the Offensive," in *Between War and Peace: Dilemmas of Israeli Security*, 169.

<sup>60</sup> Catignani, 9.

<sup>61</sup> Shamir, 123.

<sup>62</sup> Van Creveld, 116.

until recently unavailable to more than a select few.<sup>63</sup> In general, what the US Army might call best practices or principles of operations serves as doctrine in the IDF.<sup>64</sup> As a result, standardization across the entire force remained a substantial challenge. , a certain strength derives from the IDF's casual relationship with doctrine, and its most celebrated commanders achieved impressive accomplishments by this philosophy.<sup>65</sup>

The final aspect of Israeli military thought revolves around the perennial problem of numerical inferiority.<sup>66</sup> By any measure, Arab armies of the Middle East enjoy a population advantage over Israel often enhanced by equipment provided by external assistance. Israel answered the challenge by establishing a military that mobilized as much of the nation's human and material resources as possible and invested in a qualitative advantage over adversaries. This manifests as the tiered conscription system and the propensity to purchase and develop first class defense technology. Paradoxically, the less professionalized a military force, the more challenging to employ sophisticated technology or maintain a high level of training.

#### The IDF Now and in the Future

The IDF now faced an urgent problem familiar to many state armies in contemporary warfare. They needed a force skilled and powerful enough to win less frequent, but more

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<sup>63</sup> Michael Herzog, "New IDF Strategy Goes Public," *Policy Watch* 2479, The Washington Institute for Near East Foreign Policy, 28 August 2015, accessed 2 April 2016. <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/new-idf-strategy-goes-public>.

<sup>64</sup> Dima Adamsky, *The Culture of Military Innovation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 111.

<sup>65</sup> Gideon Avidor, "Mission Command is neither Technical nor Methodical – It's Cultural," Institute for Advanced Military Thinking, Rehovat, Israel, 3 March 2015, accessed 2 April 2016, [http://media.wix.com/ugd/298692\\_23c0a6455002451c883975483cebb801.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/298692_23c0a6455002451c883975483cebb801.pdf), 8.

<sup>66</sup> Avi Kober, "A Paradigm in Crisis? Israel's Doctrine of Military Decision," in *Between War and Peace: Dilemmas of Israeli Security*, 189.

dangerous land wars, but also able to manage the more frequent guerilla and terrorist conflicts. More challenging still, they needed to prepare for the hybrid conflicts which took on characteristics of both traditional maneuver and guerilla warfare, like they had faced during the 2006 Lebanon War.

For the Israelis like other western militaries, other trends excite difficulty in training for and meeting the array of potential threats. The importance of the individual in Israeli society and the subsequent sensitivity to casualties create real operational constraints.<sup>67</sup> While many so-called post-modern armies have become small and professionalized, Israel retains its three tiered conscription model. Recent reforms have resulted in a higher degree of professionalism, but the “People’s Army” attitude remains.<sup>68</sup> Since the 1982 war the IDF experienced less positive attitudes from the public.<sup>69</sup> To be sure, the IDF still enjoys a high approval rating in Israel, but there is little doubt that its domestic reputation suffered in the late 1980s and into the 1990s during the First Intifada. Hitherto unknown occurrences of conscientious objection revealed that duties required of the IDF in the last three decades divided the Israeli society and raise questions over how best to resolve the Palestinian issue.<sup>70</sup>

#### Holding to Heritage and Responding to Change

Given such a context, the IDF required significant organizational change to adjust to the reality of urban warfare. Long held assumptions about the Army’s purpose, the character of war,

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<sup>67</sup> Stuart Cohen, 58.

<sup>68</sup> Reuvan Gal and Stuart Cohen, “Still Waiting in the Wings,” in Charles C. Moskos, John Allen Williams, and David R. Segal, *The Postmodern Military: Armed Forces After the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 230.

<sup>69</sup> Stuart Cohen, 57.

<sup>70</sup> Gal and Cohen, 238.

and the severity of failure needed to answer to the new asymmetric reality. Asymmetric and urban warfare challenged the IDF's philosophy of rapidly and violently crushing adversaries with overwhelming combat power. The city increased the human cost for Israelis and forced them to make difficult moral decisions.<sup>71</sup> These factors introduced stress to the people's army concept and increased dependency on precision weapons. They pointed to lapses in military thought, which could not be ignored if urbanization and asymmetric warfare continued in their symbiosis.<sup>72</sup> In a very real sense, complex urban terrain paired with asymmetric enemies demanded paradigmatic change in the IDF. As the research reveals, such a necessary change unfolded from 1982 up through Operation Protective Edge in 2014.

### **Urban Campaigns of the IDF**

A series of case studies provides the vehicle for examining the Israelis urban experience. Each follows the same structure, beginning with an orientation on the operation's context and purpose. A narrative reviews how the operation unfolded then provides evaluation of the IDF performance and how it has changed over time. As mentioned, the IDF's performance will be examined based on how it understands the physical space of a city during urban warfare, how it contests its adversaries across the intangible domains, and the efficacy of its operations process.

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<sup>71</sup> Gal Hirsch "Urban Warfare," *Military and Strategic Affairs* Special Issue (April 2014): 23-30, 30, accessed 6 April 2016, <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/HirschUrbanWarfare.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> Azar Gat, "Why Urban Guerilla Proliferates," *Military and Strategic Affairs* Special Issue (April 2014): 11-16, 11, accessed 6 April 2016, <http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/GatWhyUrbanGuerrillaProliferates.pdf>.



## Operation Peace for Galilee and the Siege of Beirut

As the IDF's first major military encounter with a hybrid enemy in an urban area, the Lebanon War in 1982 makes a useful corner stone for this study. Both the local conditions of the Levant and the global context of the Lebanon War made it unlike any conflict the Israelis had yet encountered and presaged trends in modern urban warfare.

By the late 1970s, Jordanian forces had ejected the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) after a failed attempt to usurp King Hussein and seize control of the country.<sup>73</sup> The PLO fled to Lebanon where it established a state within a state under Yasser Arafat's leadership. Civil war resulted in an unstable balance between Maronite Christians, the PLO, and Syrian forces.<sup>74</sup> With this instability as a backdrop, the PLO began shelling northern Israeli settlements setting conditions for Israeli reprisal in the early 1980s. The Israelis prepared a response: Operation Peace for Galilee, the first major military operation conducted completely outside Israeli territory.<sup>75</sup>

Global conditions had also changed since the 1973 war. The Lebanon War received extensive media coverage, and particularly in the burgeoning television journalism market.<sup>76</sup> The world could now watch and judge the belligerents in real time. Thus, war was very much a stage and the world its audience. This reality gave new urgency to the superpowers and the pressure they exerted to terminate Arab-Israeli conflict. Even the intransigent Prime Minister Menechaim

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<sup>73</sup> Davis, 42.

<sup>74</sup> Emile F. Sahliyeh, *The PLO After the Lebanon War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), 3-4.

<sup>75</sup> Herzog and Gazit, 350.

<sup>76</sup> Dan Bawley and Eliahu Salpeter, *Fire in Beirut: Israel's War in Lebanon with the PLO* (Briarcliff Manor, NY: Stein and Day, 1984), 136.

Begin would eventually yield to pressure from external actors. He could not defy the superpowers indefinitely.<sup>77</sup>

#### Israeli War Objectives, Lack of Consensus, and Mission Creep

The objectives of the war in Lebanon remain controversial. To some in the Knesset, the objectives were initially limited to establishing a security zone twenty-five miles into Southern Lebanon and this meant that no military activity should occur outside this area. To Prime Minister Begin and his advisors, such latitude existed as to permit operations outside of the zone in order to establish it. Inside senior military circles, the main objective had not changed, but the unfolding events of the war revealed other opportunities the IDF could not ignore.<sup>78</sup> This makes assessing operational art challenging since the strategic objectives establish the logic for the operations and tactical engagements that follow. The criterion itself defies consensus and therefore evaluating the relative success of the campaign; the appropriateness of the operational approach remains fraught with difficulty.

The only objective agreed upon by all parties was the establishment of a security zone extending twenty-five miles into southern Lebanon to eliminate PLO rocket and artillery attacks against Israeli civilians in Galilee.<sup>79</sup> To ensure the sustained success of a security zone the destruction of the PLO forces in southern Lebanon emerged as a second objective. Whether intended or not, Sharon took advantage of other opportunities that developed after the war got underway. The first was the defeat of Syrian forces occupying southern Lebanon. Although Jerusalem had taken some diplomatic and military measures to avoid a major conflict with Syria, the proximity of PLO forces to the Syrians and Syrian interests in Lebanon made some degree of

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<sup>77</sup> Avner, 624.

<sup>78</sup> Davis, 17; Ariel Sharon and Chanoff, 436; Avner, 605.

<sup>79</sup> Davis, 76-77.

combat likely. The second emergent objective was the possibility of shaping an Israeli-friendly regime in Lebanon. The Christian fighters in Lebanon appeared to be the Israeli hope for such a regime, but such hopes were strained when these militias failed to make good on promises to bear the burden of fighting in Beirut itself, and were dashed altogether with the assassination of the Bashir Jemayel, the post-conflict Christian leader.<sup>80</sup>

#### Plans, Reality, and Unintended Siege

The invasion of Lebanon unfolded in two phases—the maneuver phase and the siege phase.<sup>81</sup> During the maneuver phase, the tempo was to remain high. High tempo would enable a rapid advance to the twenty-five-mile line, and prevent the escape of PLO forces, then eliminate those pockets of resistance that remained. Amphibious operations near Tyre and Sidon would enable this rapid advance by securing the river crossings there, and containing PLO fighters while armored formations hastened to Damour.<sup>82</sup>

During the siege phase of operations, the Israelis had hoped to avoid any large-scale commitment of forces to Beirut itself. Here they were depending upon the Phalangist militia to assume primacy. In the event that they did not, the IDF with its armored based formations and low proportion of infantry would be hard pressed to engage in an extensive clearing operation in such a large city.<sup>83</sup> As such, they would be selective and gradual in their approach, choosing to

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<sup>80</sup> Dupuy and Martell, 181.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 148. It is unlikely the IDF intended to become entangled in a siege based on their lack of force structuring and overtures with Christian militias.

<sup>82</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 75-78.

<sup>83</sup> Dupuy and Martell, 148.

emphasize the threat of massive firepower against PLO positions in the city, rather than a general investment or house-to-house fight.<sup>84</sup>

In the early stages of the campaign, the IDF viewed cities as obstacles. They slowed movement, took time to reduce, and sapped combat power. If the IDF were to prevent the withdrawal of the bulk of the PLO beyond the twenty-five-mile zone they would have to move quickly. This fit well with the IDF preference for mobile warfare. Spearheads of IDF armor bypassed or rapidly fought through these population centers and refugee camps while amphibious forces and follow on infantry enveloped the positions.<sup>85</sup>

These forces ceded the advantage of surprise and tempo by announcing an imminent attack and delaying clearing operations to allow non-combatants to depart the area. Unfortunately, the PLO not only used the opportunity to fall back to elaborate tunnel and bunker networks but also forcibly prevented civilians from departing the area in order to complicate the battlefield for the Israelis. For days, these forces slogged it out in a street-by-street engagement in a string of coastal towns. However, despite the vicious fighting IDF clearing operations did not turn these cities to heaps of concrete. Damage and destruction from the Lebanese civil war comingled with the more recent damage, which a discerning observer could recognize was more precise than previous conflict damage.<sup>86</sup>

More to the point, these should not be considered auxiliary or enabling operations because they were not merely to secure the IDF lines of communication, but were tied to the very purpose of the operation. The isolation and defeat of these pockets of PLO fighters was the means

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<sup>84</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 138.

<sup>85</sup> Hergoz and Gazit, 355.

<sup>86</sup> Bawley and Salpeter, 91-92.

by which the IDF established the twenty-five-mile security zone.<sup>87</sup> It would also be a mistake to think of the PLO in these cases as strictly guerilla fighters. Yasser Arafat had designs on strengthening its conventional force potential with the PLO.<sup>88</sup> This process remained incomplete at the time of the IDF offensive. The attack shattered the integrity of these nascent formations relatively quickly. Fighting as small platoon or squad sized elements represented the failure of a young and untested conventional Palestinian force, not the triumph of guerillas.<sup>89</sup> Any doubts about the intentions of PLO to become a more conventional force can be laid to rest by examining the equipment captured from the PLO during the campaign. These included, among other armaments, 1,077 combat vehicles, eighty of which were second-hand tanks.<sup>90</sup>

Accounts of the campaign refer to constant mopping up in the urban centers of Tyre and Sidon.<sup>91</sup> Such mopping up might make one think these to be easy or routine operations, but they were neither. Significant forces had to be allocated toward them. Beirut, however presented a different sort of problem for the IDF command. The city was several orders of magnitude larger and more densely populated than Tyre and Sidon. There could be no simple bypass and mop up of Beirut.

The siege of Beirut marked a shift in the character of operations in the war.<sup>92</sup> First, in the laws of armed conflict, a siege changes the assumptions and responsibilities of the belligerents

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<sup>87</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 76.

<sup>88</sup> Bawley and Salpeter, 93-94.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>90</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 113.

<sup>91</sup> Dupuy and Martell, 105, 106, 110, 130; Bawley and Salpeter, 84

<sup>92</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 127.

involved.<sup>93</sup> What is necessary and what is possible in a siege differs from a maneuver-based phase of conflict. As the operations in Tyre and Sidon indicated, any battle for the Beirut would necessitate large numbers of infantry, incur large numbers of Israeli casualties, and protract the war for weeks or months. During that time, the major powers as well as the Israeli polity were likely to lose patience. Unfortunately, with the Lebanese militias unwilling to shoulder the burden of reducing Beirut, the IDF found itself in precisely the situation it hoped to avoid.<sup>94</sup>

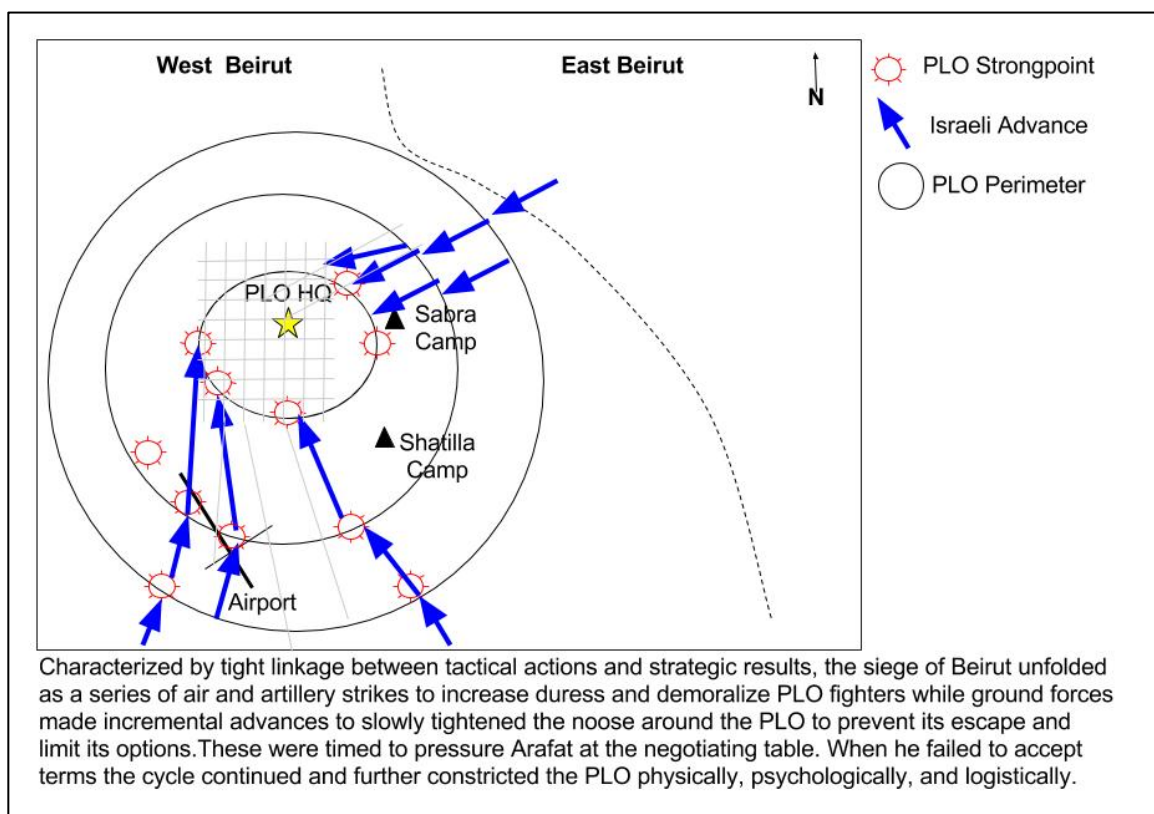


Figure 1. Siege of Beirut Operational Approach

Source: Created by author.

<sup>93</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 134.

<sup>94</sup> Dupuy and Martell, 142

The IDF isolated Beirut and settled in for a siege. Over the next several weeks, the IDF applied aggressive air and artillery strikes, and then attacked by ground in large columns against PLO strongpoints. They would ratchet up pressure by periodically cutting power or water. The means and method were clumsy, but effective over time. In his study of the war, Richard Gabriel points out that during the siege phase operations became a great deal more politically attuned.<sup>95</sup> That is, each act had greater strategic and political consequences, and directly influenced the attempts by US, Israeli, and PLO leadership to end the conflict. In a way, the siege had become an “interpretive structure;” a dialogue space where tactical actions were the language by which the belligerents communicated with each other.<sup>96</sup> In this way, the IDF slowly strangled the PLO, while the political echelon used these minor and incremental gains as leverage over Arafat. After particularly intense bombing raids on 11 and 12 August, Arafat and the Israelis reached a settlement.<sup>97</sup>

The results regarding the PLO might be considered strategically acceptable, if not successful. Arafat had hoped to get recognition as a legitimate political body, but did not achieve this.<sup>98</sup> The images of PLO fighters firing their rifles into the air as they boarded ships to leave Beirut, a deliberate attempt to portray triumph, tried to conceal the reality of a military catastrophe. In reality, the PLO suffered a military catastrophe. Its surviving membership

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<sup>95</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 138.

<sup>96</sup> Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat As Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 31. The idea of an interpretive structure, I take from Emile Simpson’s *War From the Ground Up*. In it he demonstrates that war in the modern age can, and usually does involve more than merely setting the military conditions for political change. War is also a stage to communicate in the language of tactical actions..

<sup>97</sup> Bawley and Salpeter, 109.

<sup>98</sup> Sahiyeh, 49.

scattered and its political influence weakened. In truth, the PLO never recovered from its expulsion from Beirut. Perhaps only the Gazans and West Bank Palestinians retained a measure of optimism in the PLO.<sup>99</sup>

What makes Operation Peace for Galilee shine less brilliantly, were the unexpected outcomes that followed, particularly during the occupation. Beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth noting that the defeat and exile of the PLO coupled with the ongoing Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon set conditions for the emergence of a far more deadly foe in Hezbollah.

#### Evaluating Traditional Siege Craft, Modern Armies, and Asymmetric Enemies

The siege of Beirut furnished an example of siege that unfolded along traditional lines, but in the context of modern times and sensibilities. In certain ways, a traditional siege, both parties believed that complete investment of the city carried great costs and that civilians were inextricably woven into the operating environment, certainly a traditional view of siegecraft.<sup>100</sup> Ancient methods like physical isolation and denial of energy and water found use during the operation. However, in other ways, the siege of Beirut seemed very modern because city walls had disappeared, the boundaries became permeable, and the whole of the world could witness the operation.<sup>101</sup> Despite these modern aspects, the IDF approach to the siege of Beirut reflects a traditional understanding of urban space.<sup>102</sup>

The IDF force structure remained essentially unchanged during the siege, and it proved unwieldy during this phase of operations. What infantry the IDF did have were primarily

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<sup>99</sup> Sahiyeh, 87; Bawley and Salpeter, 178.

<sup>100</sup> Bawley and Salpeter, 99, 100.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>102</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 194.



mechanized, and used to moving in large armored columns. The IDF continued to employ their forces in columns, which, while able to slog their way forward for incremental gains could not mitigate the fragmenting nature of the urban terrain.<sup>103</sup> Overwhelming firepower delivered by artillery and airstrike were used to augment the divisive effects of city structures.<sup>104</sup> Still, the IDF chose its objectives carefully, realizing the futility of a general advance in the face of so much physical volume. Columns attacked strongpoints to isolate the nests of PLO fighters and their leadership in the Hippodrome, Sabra, Shatila, and Burj al Brajneh.<sup>105</sup> These it judged to be the critical leverage points from which it could squeeze the PLO defenders like a constrictor snake. An IDF officer captured the sentiment of the besiegers during this stage in an interview, “If a city is under siege and nothing happens, they will start doing their laundry and making coffee.”<sup>106</sup>

The IDF, well regarded as masters of mobile warfare, could not make their “*kesselschlacht*” tactics work in the city.<sup>107</sup> Beirut did not make a suitable backdrop for the

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<sup>103</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 192-193.

<sup>104</sup> Jonathan C. Randal, “Israeli Guns Shell W. Beirut Heavily in 14-Hour Attack,” *Washington Post*, 2 August 1982, in Claremont Research and Publications, *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon: part II, press profile, August 1982/May 1983* (New York: Claremont Research and Publications, 1983), 4; *Jerusalem Post*, “Many killed, much damage in Beirut,” 3 August 1982, in *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon: part II*, 5; Robert Fisk, “The Times Portrait: Beirut,” *The Times*, 6 August 1982, in *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon: part II*, 3. Dozens of news articles point out the incremental progress in IDF attacks, made possible only by heavy firepower.

<sup>105</sup> Marvine Howe, “Deserted Streets, Sirens, Gunfire and Gloom,” *The New York Times*, 5 August 1982, accessed 31 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/05/world/deserted-streets-sirens-gunfire-and-gloom.html>; Thomas Friedman, “Fierce Beirut Fight,” *The New York Times*, 5 August 1982, in *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon: part II*, 7.

<sup>106</sup> James M. Markham, “Israelis keep reminding Beirut that siege is on,” *The New York Times*, 5 July 1982, accessed 31 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/07/05/world/israelis-keep-reminding-beirut-that-siege-is-on.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Citino, 2, 153. Citino draws a direct line from the German cauldron battle, or *kesselschlacht*, to the IDF in famous victories in mobile warfare in during 1967.

penetrating armored drives for which most of the senior IDF commanders had built their reputation. Theoretically, the multiple columns piercing enemy defenses looked similar to the favored armored envelopments of the open desert. In practice, however, these columns did not so much pierce as they pressed. Their advances came slow and were measured in meters rather than kilometers. Unable to disorient the PLO with its trademark speed, the IDF could only squeeze the PLO and wait.

### Tactical Actions in the Intangible Domain

The IDF gave due attention to the psychological and informational aspects of the Lebanon War, but in an imperfect and limited way. Focusing primarily on the enemy and non-combatants as an audience the IDF dropped leaflets and made permeable siege lines.<sup>108</sup> They encouraged civilians to depart the combat zone in order to deny the PLO the benefit of human shields and to maintain the IDF's values. Often the IDF delayed offensive actions to allow further time for civilians to escape target areas.<sup>109</sup>

As the siege of Beirut began, the Lebanon War evolved into something Emile Simpson might call strategic dialogue. In it, tactical actions served as prose and laws of armed conflict acted as syntax.<sup>110</sup> That resulted in a very direct connection between tactical actions and strategic

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<sup>108</sup> Sharon Oriana Fallaci, "I wanted them out of Beirut, I got what I wanted," *The Washington Post*, 28 August 1982, in *The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon: part II*, 96. During this interview with Sharon within days of the end of the siege, Sharon's attitude, representing much of the Likud party at the time was that while they would have preferred global sympathy and support, "when it comes to security, we can do without it." The ham-fisted approach to global perception and its relationship to Israel's strategic options would later change, but during Peace for Galilee, the IDF senior leadership took a short-term view of the war of perceptions.

<sup>109</sup> David Shipler, "Israel asks Syria to keep troops out of the fighting," *The New York Times*, 9 June 1982, accessed 31 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/09/world/israel-asks-syria-to-keep-troops-out-of-fighting.html>.

<sup>110</sup> Simpson, 92-94.

outcomes, as US brokered negotiations took place concurrently with the fighting. In the end, the PLO were convinced of the IDF's message; "you will die if you remain in Beirut."<sup>111</sup> However, the challenge of this strategic dialogue is that it has more than two participants. The wider audience, such as uninvolved Palestinians, the American press, and even Israeli soldiers themselves formed perceptions that the IDF had not intended, which worked at cross-purposes with the strategic aim. Convincing non-combatants of their intent to target only the PLO was at odds with the message delivered to the PLO that overwhelming force would be brought against them, potentially endangering their families.<sup>112</sup> The PLO, made good use of these paradoxical messages by preventing non-combatants from leaving the combat zone, further undermining the IDF's message. In this regard, the IDF was very much in the Dörner dilemma of solving two separate problems whose solutions seemed antithetical to each other.<sup>113</sup> Success in one appeared to erode gains made in another.

That does not necessarily imply strategic failure, but certainly an erosion of the advantage conferred by tactical success. The IDF struggled to contest the well-structured and well-distributed Palestinian narrative. The genius of the PLO method was in how it amplified certain signals while dampening others to persuade a larger global audience of its own legitimacy and Israeli barbarity.<sup>114</sup> The PLO showed damage from the civil war as if the IDF had inflicted it, and

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<sup>111</sup> Thomas Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989), 151.

<sup>112</sup> David Shipley, "Israelis say siege will not drag on," *The New York Times*, 29 June 1982, accessed 2 April 2016, <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com>.

<sup>113</sup> Dietrich Dörner, *The Logic of Failure: Why Things Go Wrong and What We Can Do to Make Them Right* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996), 51.

<sup>114</sup> Sahiyeh, 58. Western European countries and those living in West Bank and Gaza found the PLO narrative convincing.

drew attention to the Shablia massacre trying to connect it to Sharon and the IDF. Meanwhile they suppressed their use of human shields and used insiders in non-governmental organizations to exaggerate casualty figures.<sup>115</sup> Long after the Israelis lost the war of perception, members of the western press admitted it had treated the PLO lightly, but the damage had been done.<sup>116</sup>

No less a challenge, the IDF found the global community opposed to traditional siege methods in modern circumstances. It is worth remembering that, in terms of international law and urban warfare in general, and siege craft in particular are distinct from more rural battlefields. By its very nature, siege warfare involves the civilian population. Much of the burden shifts to the defender for the protection of those civilians because it can choose whether to allow protected sites to be militarized or not, to permit civilians to leave or not. The sustainment of a military force in such an instance by default makes the civilian a part of the war effort, and therefore a potential target for the besieging force.<sup>117</sup> This proved to be problematic since the audience, by virtue of twenty-four hour news cycles and increasing speed of information dissemination had become global. Despite the obviously unique nature siege craft, the global audience, which had become very much a part of the environment, were, as laypersons, relatively ignorant to such

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<sup>115</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 121. Arafat's brother was the chairman of the Palestinian Red Crescent, the organization reporting PLO casualties inside Lebanon.

<sup>116</sup> Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 73. One of a limited number of western journalist actually reporting from Beirut, Friedman castigates the western press for treating the PLO with "kid gloves."

<sup>117</sup> Watts, 8-10. International Humanitarian Law experts have made great efforts to constrain siege craft to such an extent as to eliminate it from the military repertoire. Although, perhaps well-intentioned, these overtures are likely only further constraining state actors, permitting greater latitude for non-Law of Armed Conflict signatories who rarely if ever confine or attempt to confine their methods to LoAC standards.

distinctions. Constituents of the United States and other powerful nations put pressure on their leadership, who in turn pressured the Israelis.<sup>118</sup>

#### Antiquated Operations Process

Decision-making during the advance into Lebanon unfolded in decentralized fashion. Mid-level commanders operated on general guidance and decided matters for themselves at the tactical level.<sup>119</sup> However, by the siege of Beirut, the IDF's problem-solving method became, in a way, greatly simplified. Ariel Sharon exercised tremendous control over the IDF as the minister of defense.<sup>120</sup> Thus, a rather direct line could be drawn from the political objectives to the tactical measures.

In essence, Sharon acted as the strategic and operational military leadership. The simplicity of the decision-making apparatus seems sensible for the conditions. Sharon had a foot in the political and a foot in the military arena. He knew the relative progress or setbacks of the negotiation process and was able to directly and rapidly engage the military arm to either tighten or relax its grip on West Beirut.<sup>121</sup> Sharon was enigmatic and to some, an overpowering figure. Only a Sharon, with the legitimacy and power accrued by the Likud party could decide and act in

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<sup>118</sup> Avner, 619.

<sup>119</sup> Dupuy and Martell, 142.

<sup>120</sup> Sharon and Chanoff, *Warrior*, 460. One can argue that Sharon had for all intents and purposes become the operational and strategic military leader and routinely issued instructions of such specificity that they would be unthinkable coming from a US Secretary of Defense.

<sup>121</sup> Farouk Nassar, "Fiercest Clash in Beirut, Boston Globe," *Boston Globe*, 12 July 1982, accessed 31 March 2016, <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/294148399?accountid=289922>.

such a way. In fact, disaffected Israelis in the military and political establishment took steps to limit the extent of Sharon's power after the war.<sup>122</sup>

Simplified command and decision-making frameworks carried risk too. The Israeli view of the problem seemed to be understood in absolutes. The PLO needed to be destroyed militarily and dislodged from Lebanon to resolve the terrorism problem once and for all.<sup>123</sup> It was this logic that extended the campaign into Beirut, and possibly blinded Sharon to the probable growth of guerilla and terror-based organization in the aftermath of operations in Lebanon (just as the United States had a similar blind spot following the 2003 Iraq invasion). Systemic evaluation might have revealed that the Lebanese Christian militias had diverging interests and could not be counted on to act as Israeli proxies.<sup>124</sup> It might also have revealed that prolonged occupation of Lebanon after the PLO withdrew would damage legitimacy and squander good will with moderate Shiites in southern Lebanon. Syria, wounded by its military setbacks would have motivation to provide aid and sponsorship along with the recently consolidated Ayatollah regime in Iran. As Dorner might put it, Sharon took one problem at a time in a situation where you can never affect just one problem.<sup>125</sup> Unable to predict such an eventuality and proceeding from flawed assumptions, hindsight shows only marginally improved circumstances along Israel's northern border.

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<sup>122</sup> Bawley and Salpeter, 171.

<sup>123</sup> Sharon and Chanoff, 436.

<sup>124</sup> Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, 138-139.

<sup>125</sup> Dorner, 156-158.

Although lasting victory in the Middle East seems virtually impossible now, Sharon held out hope of such an accomplishment at the time.<sup>126</sup> With the PLO militarily destroyed and its factions scattered among various Middle East nations, it seemed reasonable to believe that the threat to Israeli settlements in Galilee had been permanently solved. However, the cure might have been worse than the disease in this case. Hezbollah has grown to be a well-armed and organized military force, it controls much of Lebanon's politics, and it embarrassed the IDF in the 2006 Lebanon War; accomplishments the PLO never achieved.<sup>127</sup> The components of the PLO persists. The Al Aqsa Brigades of the Arafat's Fatah party inflicted painful losses on Israeli society during the Second Intifada.

In retrospect, the IDF performed quite well when able to fight its favored mobile warfare. Given their precautions against civilian casualties and rigid force structure, they performed as well as could be expected under the circumstances in Beirut. However, the war carried a serious lesson about the meaning of future warfare. Future wars presented none to envelop. Armored formations, until then, the jewel in the IDF crown had lost relevance in the face of hybrid urban combat. Only after painful experience in the First Intifada, would the IDF realize the new direction of urban warfare.

#### The Rocky Path from Beirut to Gaza

Between the siege of Beirut and the Gaza Wars of late, rapid and unexpected changes in the character of urban warfare caused severe ripples and turbulence in the IDF as an institution. Two urban uprisings; one relatively spontaneous, the other a planned terror campaign,

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<sup>126</sup> Sharon and Chanoff, 436. Sharon speaks of "annihilation" of the PLO and its infrastructure, suggesting the same sort of action he might take with a conventional force.

<sup>127</sup> Van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive*, 303-304; Matt Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2012) 1.

undermined the traditional order of state-centric warfare that the IDF trained and equipped itself to win.<sup>128</sup> The intifadas brought urban warfare into Israel itself and completed the shift away from state and state-like adversaries to insurgents, guerillas, and terrorists. The institutional gaze of the IDF had nearly always oriented outward but with the intifadas, it had no choice but to look inward. Here lurked troubling questions about the purpose and limitations of the IDF, its relationship with civilian authority, the source of the threat, and how to win without losing its soul.<sup>129</sup> Institutional adaptation to these stressors proceeded in fits and starts, hampered by traditional modes of thought, caustic internal politics, and uneven senior leadership. The institutional zeitgeist changed direction several times during this period as different figures gained influence and the perception of threat changed in Israel.<sup>130</sup>

The First Intifada surprised the whole of Israel. What began as demonstrations and riots became more organized and more deadly from 1987 to 1993. Because of the diversity of Palestinian factions and the seemingly emergent nature of the uprising, assessing their war objectives is problematic. More than other Israeli conflicts, the First Intifada had a Marxist dimension. Zeev Schiff concluded that “the intifada developed not as a national uprising to throw off the yoke of foreign domination but as a rebellion of the poor,” and indeed, as much ire was directed towards affluent Palestinians and those who found work outside the territories as it was towards the IDF.<sup>131</sup> With caution, one might venture that the First Intifada began as such a

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<sup>128</sup> Herzog and Gazit, 442-443.

<sup>129</sup> Samy Cohen, 12-13.

<sup>130</sup> Russell Glenn, *All Glory is Fleeting* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2012) 15-16; Avi Kober, “What Happened to Israeli Military Thought?” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no 5 (2011), 707-732, 709-715.

<sup>131</sup> Zeev Schiff, Ehud Yaari, and Ina Friedman, *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising--Israel's Third Front* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 79, 102.



rebellion intended to change the economic circumstances and took on more nationalistic objectives of autonomy and self-determination as the leaders of Palestinian factions like Hamas and Fatah gained leverage within the movement.

For the Israelis' part, consensus on the overall desired end state remained elusive. Major General Mitzna, the commander of the IDF Central Command at the time succinctly stated the objectives of the IDF during the First Intifada as "our aim is to put a stop to the rioting, to restore order, and to bring life back to normal so as to provide Israeli government and citizens with the best conditions for making proper political decisions about the future of the territories."<sup>132</sup> Unfortunately, it took years for the Israeli political apparatus to see the First Intifada as a problem needing political reconciliation. All too often, in the early years of the conflict the Knesset, the Ministries, and the IDF found little agreement on the political objectives and in fact, civilian authorities seemed to disavow responsibility for elucidating them.<sup>133</sup>

The uprising presented no military objective, and thus frustrated attempts to formulate a cohesive operational approach. Moreover, the Palestinians held the initiative throughout most of the uprising. Van Creveld notes that, after failing to crush the uprising in its infancy, a "dreary routine developed," wherein the demonstrators would gather near roadblocks or military facilities and invariably devolve into riot behavior with rocks and Molotov cocktails thrown and cars and

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<sup>132</sup> Schiff, 169.

<sup>133</sup> Asher Wallfish and Joshua Brilliant, "Mitzna: Settlers Are IDF's Main Problem," *Jerusalem Post*, 29 May 1989, accessed 30 March 2016c <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/320930247?accountid=28992>. This article draws a telling comparison between IDF Chief of Staff Dan Shomron and Foreign Minister Moshe Arens. Arens deflected Shomron's comments that his forces were only able to provide space for a political solution, to which Arens responded that this was merely, "passing the buck."

structures set ablaze.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, it seems the most significant shifts in the direction of the Intifada seemed initiated by forces external to Israel. The first was the decision of the Hashemite king of Jordan, King Hussein to withdraw his claim to the West Bank.<sup>135</sup> Ultimately, this strengthened the hand of the Fatah group in the PLO, whose influence to this point had flagged compared to the more radical and locally appealing Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Having gained influence and restored his position as the primary broker of the Palestinian movement Arafat boxed himself in by aligning himself with Saddam Hussein.<sup>136</sup> Hussein's aggression towards Kuwait and Israel dampened the international community's sympathy for the Palestinians and isolated Arafat's Fatah led PLO. Israeli restraint as Iraqi Scuds attacked its cities did more to restore the Israeli bargaining position than any act of military force.<sup>137</sup>

The 1993 Oslo Accords were Arafat's only means of saving face and remaining the internationally recognized representative of Palestinian interests.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, Hamas had significantly eroded his hegemony. Given all of this, it appears that in the First Intifada, military action alone could not achieve meaningful objectives. Moreover, unexpected contingencies rather than human agency created the space for political solution to the First Intifada.

When the Al Aqsa Intifada erupted in 2000, few mainstream historians and political scientists believed it shared the spontaneous nature of its predecessor, despite Yasser Arafat's

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<sup>134</sup> Van Creveld, 343.

<sup>135</sup> King Hussein of Jordan, "Disengagement from the West Bank (July 31 1988)," in *The Arab-Israeli Reader*, 338-340.

<sup>136</sup> *Jerusalem Post*, "Saddam Hussein's Other War," 14 January 1991, accessed 30 March 2016, <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/321016447?accountid=28992>.

<sup>137</sup> Gazit, 303.

<sup>138</sup> Patrick Tyler, *Fortress Israel* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012) 366.

emphatic assertions to the contrary.<sup>139</sup> Many understand the Al Aqsa Intifada as Arafat's attempt to wring more concessions from the Israeli government in the Oslo Peace Process and one that necessitated preparation and organization.<sup>140</sup> Having witnessed the challenges of the ongoing conflict in southern Lebanon, many Arabs concluded that similar asymmetric conflict would drive the Israelis to bargain from a position of weakness.<sup>141</sup>

The Palestinian objectives for this new wave of violence remain difficult to clearly identify, as they are the product of a two-level game wherein Yasser Arafat was trying to maintain his position of power, and to achieve an agreement for Palestinian statehood that would be legitimate to the Palestinians.<sup>142</sup> It appears that the Al Aqsa Intifada was meant to use terror to squeeze Israeli negotiators into offering more generous terms, while shoring up Arafat's position among the Palestinians by showing that he could wield violence to make gains with the Jewish state lest the more radical groups like Hamas become more appealing with their policy of non-negotiation.<sup>143</sup>

The IDF objectives during the Al Aqsa Intifada shifted. They begin, under Prime Minister Barak as containing violence and preventing terror from derailing the peace process.

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<sup>139</sup> Yasser Arafat, "Speech to Arab Summit (October 21, 2000)," in *The Arab-Israeli Reader*, 556; Gary C. Gambill, "The Intifada Behind the Al-Aqsa Intifada," *Middle East News Online*, 14 November 2000, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/203001851?accountid=28992>.

<sup>140</sup> Catignani, 102.

<sup>141</sup> Ronen Sebag, "Lebanon: The Intifada's False Premise," *Middle East Quarterly* (Spring 2002): 13-21, accessed 31 March 2016, <http://www.meforum.org/173/lebanon-the-intifadas-false-premise>.

<sup>142</sup> Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, "One Year of Yasser Arafat's Intifada: How it Started and How it Might End," *Jerusalem Issue Brief* 1, no. 4 (1 October 2001), accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.jcpa.org/art/brief1-4.htm>.

<sup>143</sup> Gambill.

Once the Israeli government determined that Oslo had irrevocably failed under Prime Minister Sharon, the IDF transitioned to defeating terrorist attacks, then to destroying the terrorist infrastructure, and ending the suicide attacks that were so disruptive to civilian life.<sup>144</sup> Operation Defensive Shield sought to attain the latter.

Defensive Shield involved targeted counter-terrorism clearance operations in several West Bank cities over the course of one month. The IDF's unifying logic of these disparate tactical actions was the determination to dismantle human and physical infrastructure of the Al Aqsa Martyr Brigades and highlight the Palestinian Authority's (PA) involvement with terrorism while minimizing harm to the Palestinian population.<sup>145</sup> The unique nature of these disparate towns and cities required distinct and unique operational approach in each. As such, commanders developed innovative methods of isolating and clearing these terror strongholds. Sustaining relatively few casualties and capturing or killing hundreds of terrorists, Defensive Shield effectively stunned Arafat's terror group and marked a turning point in the Al Aqsa Intifada.<sup>146</sup>

At first, it was not immediately evident how successful the operation had been.<sup>147</sup> Violence continued, albeit in a less organized form, and IDF forces returned to West Bank in

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<sup>144</sup> Catignani, 104.

<sup>145</sup> Shaul Mofaz, "Operation DS: Lessons and Aftermath," *Policy Watch* 387, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 18 July 2002, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/operation-defensive-shield-lessons-and-aftermath>.

<sup>146</sup> Catignani, 113.

<sup>147</sup> Danny Rubinstein, "The Infrastructure of Terror," *Haaretz*, 2 December 2002, accessed 20 March 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/the-infrastructure-of-terror-1.26686>.

several follow up operations.<sup>148</sup> By early 2005, the IDF widely believed that Defensive Shield had indeed broken the back of Arafat's terror campaign, and set conditions to restore responsibility for the West Bank to the PA.<sup>149</sup> In February 2005, Prime Minister Sharon and the new PA leader Mahmoud Abbas official ended the Second Intifada.<sup>150</sup>

The IDF's performance and confidence as an institution during this period followed a roller coaster path. The First Intifada found the Israeli defense establishment underprepared and its relationship with civilian leadership strained. At the end of the First Intifada, the IDF spent several years reflecting on its challenges, and invested in professional development and education. A cadre of "young Turks" carried new ideas into the field, improving performance during the Al Aqsa Intifada.<sup>151</sup> After the Al Aqsa Intifada, internal competition and politics stymied reforms and in some cases corrupted them so that the wrong lessons were carried forward.<sup>152</sup> The well-documented military shortcomings of the Second Lebanon War bear witness

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<sup>148</sup> Amos Harel, "In determined Path So Far, Orders Are to 'Take Your Time'," *Haaretz*, 26 June 2002, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/in-determined-path-so-far-the-orders-are-take-your-time-1.41337>.

<sup>149</sup> Amos Harel, "This Time It's Clear They Want It," *Haaretz*, 10 February 2005, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/features/this-time-it-s-clear-they-want-it-1.149816>.

<sup>150</sup> Ofer Aderet, "The Intifada That Was," *Haaretz*, 1 October 2010, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/the-intifada-that-was-1.316608>.

<sup>151</sup> Shimon Naveh, *Operational Art and the IDF: A Critical Study of a Command Culture* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, 30 September 2007), 78.

<sup>152</sup> Matt Matthews, *Operational Leadership Experiences in the Global War on Terrorism: Interview with BG (Ret.) Shimon Naveh* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 28 November 2007), accessed 31 March 2016, <http://cgsc.cdmhost.com/cdm/ref/collection/p4013coll13/id/754>. An interview with Shimon Naveh indicates that much of the institutional change and operational thought had been misunderstood or applied differently than intended; Avi Kober, "The Rise and Fall of Israeli Operational Art, 1948-2008," in *The Evolution of Operational Art*, edited by John Andreas Olsen and Martin Van Creveld (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 180. Avi Kober disputes

to the struggles of what had been called the premier military in the Middle East.<sup>153</sup> It belongs to another study to fully survey the intifadas and the Second Lebanon War, however, it is important to realize the depth of the IDF's crisis of confidence and its effect on Israeli operations in Gaza in the last decade.

### The Gaza Campaigns

The Gaza Campaigns unfolded in a substantially different political context than the siege of Beirut. Operations Cast Lead and Protective Edge took place after the 2005 unilateral withdrawal of security forces and civilian settlers from Gaza initiated by Ariel Sharon during his second term as prime minister. With the disengagement from Gaza, the conditions changed completely. The Gaza Strip no longer operated under the law of occupation and held elections.<sup>154</sup> Hamas won the elections by a large margin, a clear rejection of Fatah, the dominant force in the PA, by the population of Gaza. Hamas and Fatah fought a sharp battle in the streets of Gaza resulting in the retreat from Gaza of the PA forces and dissolving formal relations between two.<sup>155</sup> Rockets soon fell on Israeli cities in greater numbers than before and led to blockades, which crippled Hamas's ability to deliver services. Even with poverty at all-time lows, Hamas'

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this idea and assesses Naveh and his Operational Theory Research Insititute, as responsible for obscuring military thinking rather than leading the way to sound operational art.

<sup>153</sup> "The Winograd Commission Final Report," Council on Foreign Relations, 30 January 2008, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.cfr.org/israel/winograd-commission-final-report/p15385>.

<sup>154</sup> Ariel Sharon, "Disengagement Plan (May 28, 2004)," in *The Israeli-Arab Reader*, 591.

<sup>155</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Gaza: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 290-294.

popularity with the Gazans seemed undiminished and the hand of Fatah weakened in the Gaza Strip.<sup>156</sup>

Such a development might have been viewed with despair for the Israeli political establishment, but it did simplify matters for the IDF. The Hamas regime had come to power in free and democratic elections, and was clearly the form of governance favored by Gazans. Its policy of refusal to recognize Israel, its use of suicide bombers, and hostility towards the PA and Mahmoud Abbas meant that the IDF would regard the entire territory of Gaza as hostile.<sup>157</sup> Such a change did not alter the Israeli attitude towards avoiding civilian casualties, effectively pulling the more moderate PA out of the line of fire and shifting the conflict from an incipient insurgency to a state facing an Islamic city-state with a guerilla army.

The situation in Gaza by the end of the disengagement had therefore created an entirely different set of conditions for the IDF. Their enemy, a pariah in the Arab world, was politically and geographically isolated, and now had responsibilities to the constituents that had elected it. Hamas' forces themselves could not be considered particularly capable. Hezbollah garnered the lion's share of funding, but still Hamas believed the traditional advantage a defender enjoyed in urban terrain could make any IDF operation very costly.<sup>158</sup>

The Gaza Campaigns reveal the probable nature of future conflict and the level of sophistication required to meet military and political objectives. Here the environment could be described as confused, the enemy nebulous, and the operational objectives elusive. Given such

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<sup>156</sup> Filiu, 296.

<sup>157</sup> Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Gaza: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 305.

<sup>158</sup> The Middle East Research Institute, "Hamas 'Victory Festival' in Damascus," Special Dispatch No. 2499, 24 August 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/3590.htm>.

difficulties the IDF managed to achieve a measure of success, and in the time between these conflicts improved on its sophistication.

#### Operation Cast Lead: Shaking off the Second Lebanon War

In addition to the disengagement from Gaza, other factors shaped the context of Operation Cast Lead. Operation Cast Lead followed the ill-starred 2006 Second Lebanon War and the ensuing reforms. The Winograd Commission assembled by the Knesset found that the IDF had showed signs of unpreparedness in essential tasks, clumsy or misapplied planning and decision-making methodologies, and was over dependent on its air element.<sup>159</sup> The Israeli defense establishment sensed doubt and anxiety over the IDF's ability to deter and respond to future threats. A new Chief of Staff, Major General Ashkenozi had replaced Dan Halutz and recommitted the IDF to basic warfighting skills, which had eroded as revealed by the 2006 war.<sup>160</sup>

Meanwhile in Gaza, Hamas had used the time since its ascent to power and military success over Fatah to enhance smuggling networks and develop defensive strongpoints throughout Gaza. Hamas' operating concept manifested as fighting from among the population to include protected sites while launching rockets against Israeli civilian centers.<sup>161</sup> Although rockets had fallen on Israel in large numbers before the attack that precipitated Operation Cast Lead, relative calm held in the few months prior to the operation. A 4 November Israeli raid

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<sup>159</sup> "The Winograd Commission Final Report."

<sup>160</sup> Avi Kober, "OP Ed: Gobi Ashkenazi - A Balance Sheet," *Arutz Sheva*, 15 February 2011, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/9994>.

<sup>161</sup> The Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, *Hamas Exploitation of Civilians as Human Shields* (Tel Aviv, Israel: Intelligence Heritage and Commemoration Center, 6 January 2009), accessed 31 March 2016, [http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Hamas\\_Exploitation\\_Civilians\\_Human\\_Shields.aspx](http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Terrorism/Palestinian/Pages/Hamas_Exploitation_Civilians_Human_Shields.aspx), 45.



directed against a tunnel developed to capture Israeli soldiers like Corporal Gilad Shilat, sparked a deluge of Hamas rockets.<sup>162</sup> When an already rickety ceasefire failed in mid-December 2008, the IDF delivered a sharp and well-considered response.

### *Deterrence as a Wartime Objective*

Never sharply drawn, the Israeli political objectives drew criticism as imprecise. However, this is understandable, especially in the Israeli context where shaping perceptions and achieving sustained objectives can be a multi-generational endeavor.<sup>163</sup> In a broad sense, the objective was to improve the security reality for the state of Israel.<sup>164</sup> Political reconciliation at the time and even now seems improbable, thus any military action in Gaza was never likely to push Hamas closer to lasting peace, yet the status quo was unsustainable. Besides the need to respond to Hamas rocket fire and protect Israeli civilians, the unspoken objective was the restoration of Israeli deterrence.

For Hamas, the objectives are less clear. Under the circumstances, regime survival might be one objective, but it seems silly to state the obvious. What regime ever has its own demise in

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<sup>162</sup> Isabel Kershner, "Israeli Strike is First in Gaza Since Start of Ceasefire, *The New York Times*, 4 November 2008, accessed 30 March 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/world/middleeast/05mideast.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/05/world/middleeast/05mideast.html?_r=0). Shilat's capture is indicative of the Israeli sensitivity to killed or captured soldiers as compared to their non-state adversaries.

<sup>163</sup> Israel Tal, *National Security: The Israeli Experience* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2000), 46. The sentiment is well put by Israel Tal whose book *National Security* takes the position that "A rogue state—a state that adopts an absolute strategy and sets out to attain ambitious war aims without paying attention to limits to its power—ultimately fails and pays a high price. A strategy of compromise derives from moderate national goals; it does not define rigid goals. One cannot predict the outcome of world trends, political or social; thus, compromise allows freedom of action within the historical dialectics that result from changing circumstances and opportunities. After all, an interest deemed vital today may seem less so tomorrow."

<sup>164</sup> Johnson, 111.

mind? Irrational as it might seem, Hamas appears not to have expected a major Israeli response to the rocket attacks in December of 2008.<sup>165</sup> Part of the reason for the apparently irrational Hamas behavior may be attributed to internal division among Hamas leadership in the Strip and Damascus.<sup>166</sup> With the Israeli response, their objectives may simply be defined as using Gaza's dense, urban terrain in the attrition of IDF soldiers, Israeli will, and international support of Israel while protecting their own bargaining chip, Gilad Shilet.<sup>167</sup>

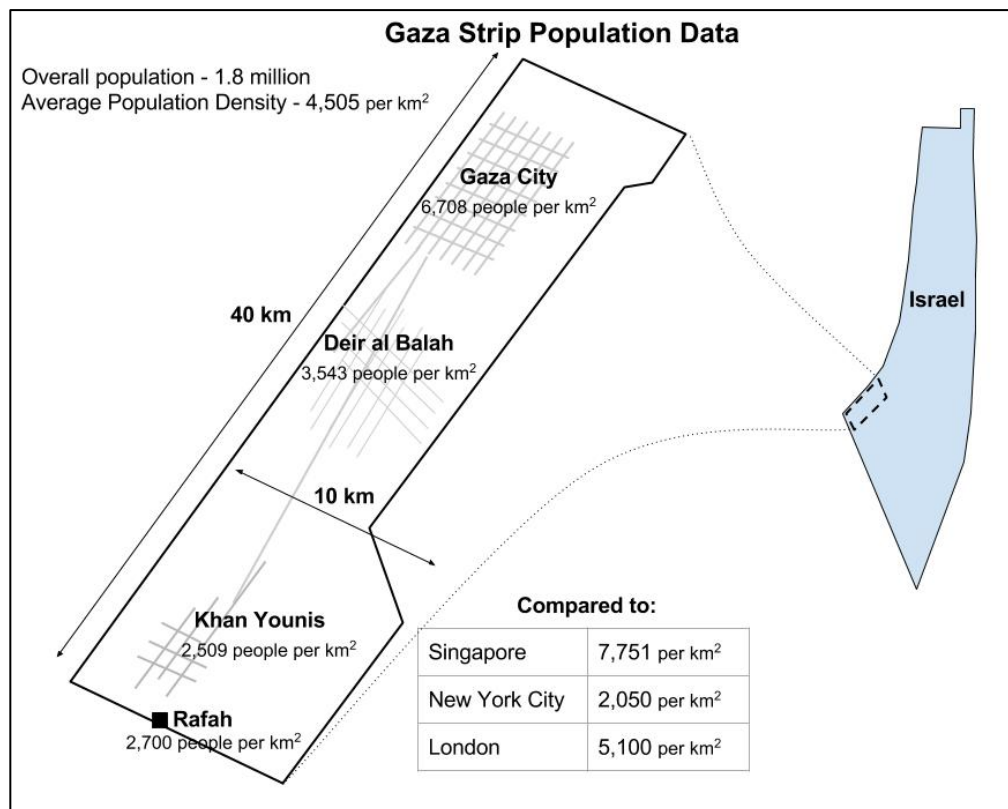


Figure 2. Gaza Strip Population Density

Source: Created by author. Data compiled from *BBC News*, "Life in the Gaza Strip," accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-20415675>.

<sup>165</sup> Cordesman, 9.

<sup>166</sup> Filiu, 315.

<sup>167</sup> Johnson, 118.

*Well Laid, Well Executed Plans*

Clear, simple, and adaptable, the IDF plan had much to recommend it. By means of superior intelligence, the IDF mean to paralyze Hamas fighters and set conditions for ground combat with an intense air campaign. Afterward brigade-sized columns would envelop Gaza City from north, east, and west. From here, they would seize footholds outside built up areas and use unpredictable methods to avoid prepared defenses in order to penetrate the city core for short duration raids and attacks.<sup>168</sup> At no point did they attempt to seize and retain large amounts of terrain or conduct large-scale clearance operations. The military objectives were limited to disrupting Hamas' indirect fire capability, destroying their tunnel networks, and killing or capturing their tactical level fighters in order to improve the security situation. An additional, perhaps more strategic military objective was to restore the deterrent reputation of the IDF. This required relatively few casualties and significant damage inflicted upon the enemy. It is possible that some viewed a somewhat negative world opinion of the IDF as actually helpful as it made it clear that Israel when it felt threatened, would act regardless of the international community's attitude.<sup>169</sup>

Operation Cast Lead began with a 27 December Israeli Air Force attack, which surpassed even the Six Day War in its scale and precision. The Israeli Air Force struck one hundred targets within a span of four minutes achieving near complete surprise.<sup>170</sup> Israel's deception plan deserves much credit for the surprise. It caught operational and tactical Hamas leaders unprepared

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<sup>168</sup> Cordesman, 40-41.

<sup>169</sup> Johnson, 117.

<sup>170</sup> Glenn, *Glory Restored?*, 30.

and undispersed contributing significantly to operational shock from which Hamas struggled to recover. This early air phase continued for a week and focused first on Hamas command centers, communication capabilities, and rocket assembly factories before shifting to infrastructure, tunnels, and underground bunkers as Hamas recovered from the initial shock.<sup>171</sup>

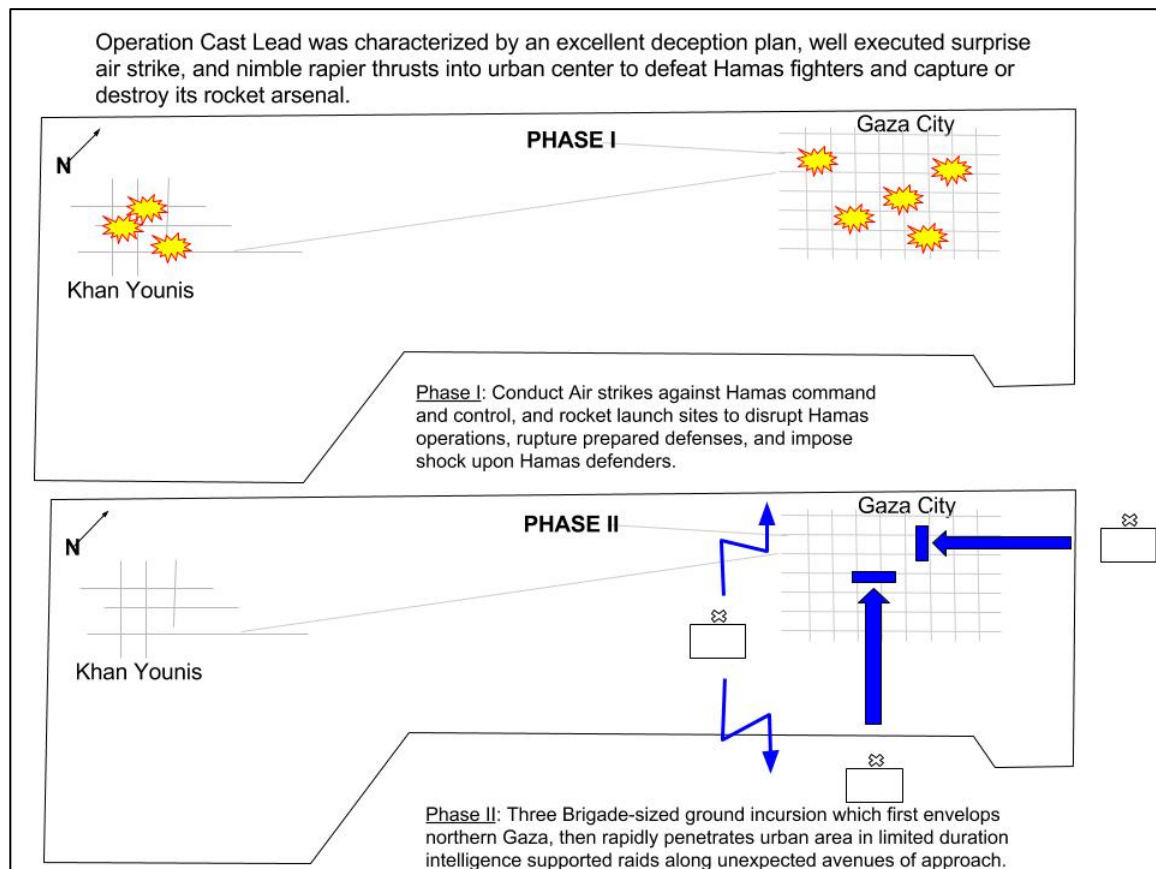


Figure 3. Cast Lead Operational Approach

Source: Created by author.

By 3 January, the Israeli Air Force set conditions for the ground combat phase. Having already breached or damaged much of Hamas' main defenses, the land component rapidly

<sup>171</sup> Glenn, *Glory Restored*, 31.

enveloped Gaza City with three brigades, isolating it from the Gaza Strip. Having effectively isolated Gaza City, it appeared to Hamas that a major block-by-block seizure of Gaza City was in the offing.<sup>172</sup>

The IDF plan avoided such a costly and time-consuming approach. Instead, one can see echoes of the mentality that drove Operation Defensive Shield. IDF ground forces avoided the predictable routes along main streets using or creating secondary routes with bulldozers, explosives, or cutting tools and therefore bypassing ambushes and improvised explosive devices. They moved quickly using “rapier thrusts” rather than a prolonged and deliberate large attacks.<sup>173</sup> These operations had limited goals of destroying or capturing caches, killing Hamas fighters and intermediate leadership, and locating and destroying tunnels.<sup>174</sup> The IDF had effectively mitigated the tactical and operational advantages of defense in an urban environment. By 18 January, the IDF had accomplished all it believed possible without a substantial increase in troop strength and prolonging the conflict.

#### *Evaluating Success: A Page from the Defensive Shield Playbook*

Some who have studied Operation Cast Lead reached the conclusion that it evinced a return to tried and true combat methods, which explains the military success of the IDF.<sup>175</sup> Undeniably, there is truth to this. The reforms introduced by Major General Ashkenazi included combined arms training, put leaders back in the frontlines and emphasized clear, precise language

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<sup>172</sup> Cordesman, 20, 40, 57.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Farquhar et al., 2.

in orders.<sup>176</sup> The manner by which the IDF conducted the operation also indicates a wider application of post-modern inspired understanding of the physical space in the Gaza Strip.

In truth, Operation Cast Lead seemed to be an improvement on ideas developed in Operation Defensive Shield rather than a true conventional campaign.<sup>177</sup> They brought forward lessons learned about making their own paths, using armored dozers and light infantry to pick out new avenues of approach and neutralize the thousands of booby traps waiting on more conventional avenues of approach.<sup>178</sup> The IDF found that it could treat a city space like a body in surgery, isolating certain portions while cutting into others to reach the desired organ. For example, correspondents and Hamas operatives stated that the attack compartmentalized Gaza into three parts, disrupting the movement of weapons and fighters from one pocket to the next.<sup>179</sup> Of course, the body cannot remain under anesthesia indefinitely, so these actions occurred quickly and ended suddenly to prevent the enemy from adjusting to the unexpected scalpel thrust.

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<sup>176</sup> Yaakov Katz, "Better Medical Response, Efficient Logistics among Changes in Fighting since Second Lebanon War. Officers are Tight-Lipped to the Media, using 'Clearer Language' Issuing Orders," *Jerusalem Post*, 8 January 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <https://lumen.cgscarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/319678881?accountid=28992>.

<sup>177</sup> Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007), 185-186. Operation Defensive Shield featured several simultaneous counter-terrorist operations in different urban areas. In Nablus, a technique pioneered by then Colonel Avi Kochavi resulted in IDF forces tunneled through the urban area itself, and turning the terrorists out of prepared fighting positions and into the streets where they were killed or captured by the IDF who had effectively turned the city "inside-out."

<sup>178</sup> Yaakov Katz, "'Black Thunder' Unmanned Dozers to Play Greater Role in Infantry Operations," *Jerusalem Post*, 30 March 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/319674914?accountid=28992>.

<sup>179</sup> *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, "Israel Says Hamas Avoids Direct Clashes; Operation may Last 'Weeks'," 6 January 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/458820134?accountid=28992>.

IDF officers noted in interviews that in this campaign, the IDF had to keep moving or risk ceding the initiative to Hamas.<sup>180</sup>

Normally, such dense and complicated urban scape as Gaza City would dissuade a conventional force, but during Operation Cast Lead posed little trouble for the IDF whose soldiers managed to enter and clear fifteen-story high-rises in downtown Gaza.<sup>181</sup> The highly successfully initial airstrikes, the creation of alternate movement corridors, the speed of the advance, and the operational shock created by these activities enabled the IDF to plunge deep into Gaza and at the relatively light cost of ten killed in action.<sup>182</sup>

#### *Operational Deception and Competing with Pallywood*

Cast Lead also showcased an improved appreciation for the intangible factors of war and the Israeli penchant for military deception. The intensity and timing of well-informed airstrikes induced operational shock for Hamas. This combined with an effective deception plan allowed the IDF to first stun, and then aggressively attack by combined arms a confused adversary. One pillar of the deception plan included complete media silence. In contrast to the Second Lebanon War, the IDF chose to limit public statements to its official spokesperson.<sup>183</sup> The IDF ground

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<sup>180</sup> *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, “Israeli Military Officer Says Entire Hamas Companies Obliterated,” 11 January 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/458818921?accountid=28992>.

<sup>181</sup> Yaakov Katz, “High Stakes: IDF Trains to Storm Skyscrapers,” *Jerusalem Post*, 17 July 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/319705656?accountid=28992>.

<sup>182</sup> *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, “Israeli Army’s Engineering Units Profiled,” 12 April 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/458725289?accountid=28992>. Interviewed officers stated that casualty estimates had been calculated at 1 Israeli soldier for every 10 Palestinians killed, but were much closer to 1 for every 100 militants killed.

<sup>183</sup> Yaakov Lappin, “‘Future Conflicts Will be Bigger than Operation Cast Lead,’ Says Barak. IDF shows Off Integrative Combat Doctrine in Ambitious War Drill ‘Rivals Trying to

element had trained in preparation for just such a campaign between the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead, but delayed mobilization to the last moment, ensuring Hamas would have little to no warning of the impending assault even sending soldiers on leave immediately before the operation.<sup>184</sup> Media exclusion incurred certain costs as well. The IDF took lengthy and exhaustive measures to avoid civilian casualties, yet most went unreported by the press. Although much popularized by the later Operation Protective Edge, the techniques of “roof-knocking” and direct phone contact underwent their first trials during Cast Lead.<sup>185</sup> If the IDF can be faulted for anything, it would be an ineffective marketing campaign for itself.

Since the intifadas, the information environment was now more complicated and the information war raged before, during, and after the military campaign, and by actors far removed from the fighting.<sup>186</sup> By barring professional journalists from the battlefield, only Al-Jazeera and “local stringers under the control of Hamas,” remained in Gaza, all but ensuring that Hamas’ civilian casualty figures and war crime accusations had no challenging views.<sup>187</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Counsel and non-governmental organizations such as Btselem and

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Master Unconventional Warfare,’ Deputy Chief of Staff Warns,” *Jerusalem Post*, 10 June 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/319694680?accountid=28992>, 3.

<sup>184</sup> Cordesman, 15.

<sup>185</sup> Johnson, 132.

<sup>186</sup> James Fallow, “Who Shot Muhammed al Dura,” *The Atlantic*, June 2003, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2003/06/who-shot-mohammed-al-dura/302735>. The case of Muhammed al Dur, a child alleged to have been deliberately killed by IDF soldiers in a 2000 firefight illustrates the point. Although largely debunked as staged documentation, the story broke to the world by a French media outlet had caustic effects for Israel’s reputation.

<sup>187</sup> Gerald M. Steinberg, “Next IDF Chief Needs a Strategy for both Political and Legal Warfare,” *Jerusalem Post*, 24 August 2010, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/840665632?accountid=28992>.



Amnesty International funded by governments and groups hostile to Israel managed to deliver damaging blows to the Israelis based on their alleged status as unaffiliated humanitarian groups and the “halo effect” conferred by such a status.<sup>188</sup> The so-called Goldstone Report did much harm to the Israelis after the conflict concluded. Even though Goldstone later reversed himself on his key finding that the IDF had deliberately targeted civilians, the damage had been done.<sup>189</sup> However, as one observe from Operation Protective Edge, a deliberate and consistent effort should be mounted to contest this warping of the narrative long after the guns fall silent.

The consequences of this limited the mobility of senior Israeli officials and military personnel. Groups who view themselves as allies to the Palestinians leverage international law to issue warrants for specific Israelis visiting their country. Such lawfare has the effect of isolating IDF officials, reducing their ability to learn and share learning with other western militaries, and one cannot help but suspect that it factors into their decision-making during operations.<sup>190</sup>

Still, one message clearly communicated and clearly received by Israel’s enemies was that the IDF had regained its footing after the shaky 2006 performance. Much of the

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<sup>188</sup> Gerld M. Steinberg, “Soft Powers Play Hardball: NGO’s Wage War Against Israel,” in Efraim Inbar, *Israel’s Strategic Agenda* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 140; Gerald M. Steinberg, “Human Rights Vs. Politics: B’Tselem Goes to Washington,” *Jewish Exponent*, 9 August 2007, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/227293322?accountid=28992>, 25; Eliana Trink, “Exploiting Medicine for the Politics of Hate,” *The American Israelite*, 20 August 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/1558567920?accountid=28992>; Jason Edelstein, “The Search for the Truth,” *Jerusalem Post*, 12 October 2010, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/843390943?accountid=28992>, 16.

<sup>189</sup> Richard Goldstone, “Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and War Crimes,” *The Washington Post*, 1 April 2011, accessed 30 March 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC_story.html).

<sup>190</sup> *Xinhua News Agency - CEIS*, “Israeli Army Seeking Solution to Foreign ‘Lawfare’ Attacks,” 3 March 2011, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgscarl.com/docview/854919150?accountid=28992>.

aggressiveness and boldness of Operation Cast Lead seemed calculated to reinspire awe or at least reticence among Hezbollah and Hamas fighters toward the IDF.<sup>191</sup>

### *The Return of Mission Command and Learning in Combat*

A necessary and overdue adjustment to the IDF operations process, commanders remained nearer to the action, able to use their senses and intuition to inform decision-making. This represented a sharp break from the 2006 Lebanon War, where commanders adopted the “Plasma screen” management style away from the battlefield.<sup>192</sup> During Operation Cast Lead, street level command enabled carefully arranged tactical actions to achieve a particular strategic result; namely that of restoring IDF’s deterrent capability. If translated into a statement, the tactical action communicated that the IDF can begin and end an urban campaign on its own terms and will not be prevented from punishing its enemies who shelter in the heart of a cityscape. Commanders on the ground used this as the logic to drive decentralized operations.<sup>193</sup>

The high rate of change in urban warfare, places demands on the learning ability of combatants, and here the IDF made significant gains. On an ad hoc basis, IDF general staff dispatched trainers to front line units to distribute lessons learned and emerging enemy techniques to commanders in the field.<sup>194</sup> Essentially, battlefield conditions changed so quickly that the IDF

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<sup>191</sup> Barak Ravid, “Olmert: Gaza War won’t end until rockets and smuggling stop,” *Haaretz*, 12 January 2009, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/olmert-gaza-war-won-t-end-until-rockets-and-smuggling-stop-1.267974>.

<sup>192</sup> Avi Kober, “The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008): 3-40, 19.

<sup>193</sup> Shamir, *Transforming Command*, 155.

<sup>194</sup> *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, “Israeli Combat Battalions to Get Real-Time Instructors during Battle,” 28 October 2010, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/760566376?accountid=28992>; the value of such an officer in the organization resulted in the IDF making it a more permanent fixture.

assigned officers to battalions to enhance organizational learning in the field and proliferate such knowledge across combat formations. Such a feedforward ability enabled the IDF to adapt more quickly than Hamas whose ability to communicate amongst its operatives had been seriously damaged early in the campaign.

#### Operation Protective Edge: IDF Urban Warfare Comes into Its Own

By 2014, the context in the Gaza Strip had again changed significantly, shaping the operational decisions of both Hamas and Israel. Baggage from the previous Gaza Campaign haunted Israel. The Goldstone Report that famously and publicly accused Israelis of state-sponsored war crimes during Operation Cast Lead became a millstone around the IDF's neck. Even though Goldstone himself reversed his position and questioned much of the report's finding, the damage was done. As several observers of the Gaza conflicts have remarked, even though retractions are often printed, they receive little fanfare and few if any are moved by them.<sup>195</sup>

Powerful political and religious forces across the world reshaped the parameters of the 2014 Gaza War, generating new opportunities in some cases, but constraining action in others. First, tension between the US White House administration and Netanyahu's government complicated matters. The Israelis have never been prisoners of US administrations, but prefer to show themselves valuable allies to the superpower, especially when international bodies like the European Union and United Nations have such consistent adversarial attitudes towards the state

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<sup>195</sup> High Level Military Group, *An Assessment of the 2014 Gaza Conflict*, 45.

of Israel.<sup>196</sup> Still, although debates over the value of the US-Israeli partnership do not seem to seriously question the advantages of such a relationship, they acknowledge a certain strain.<sup>197</sup>

Often overlooked by the west, the politics of Egypt produce strategic consequences in the Gaza Strip. The rise to power of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt alarmed Israeli policy makers and threatened to undermine the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement, so important to ending conventional Arab Israeli Wars.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood government expressed solidarity with Hamas and offered material support. As such, the coup, which displaced Muslim Brotherhood, correspondingly brought on a sigh of relief. Indeed, several Arab regimes in the Middle East expressed unprecedented approval for the 2014 Israeli campaign against Hamas.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> John Palmer, "Washington Snub Reopens Rift Across Atlantic Europe is Afraid that America is Bowing to Israel's Hard Line, Writes John Palmer in Brussels," *The Guardian*, 1 October 1996, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/295008263?accountid=28992>, 012; Walter Rodgers, "Rift between Israel and the United States: Flotilla Incident Didn't Help," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 June 2010, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/366115884?accountid=28992>, 23; Sam Sokol, "US Jewish Groups Back Netanyahu, Downplay Rift between Washington and Jerusalem Over Iran," *Jerusalem Post*, 5 March 2015, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1661951950?accountid=28992>, 3.

<sup>197</sup> Robert Satloff and Chas Freeman, *Israel Asset or Liability?: A Debate on the Value of the U.S.-Israel Relationship* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2011), accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/SatloffDebate.pdf>, 18; Helene Cooper, "U.S. Defense Secretary Visits Israel to Soothe Ally After Iran Deal," *New York Times*, 21 July 2015, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1697379542?accountid=28992>; Herb Keinon, "Amidror: Israel Will Stand Alone Against Iran. US is Irreplaceable Ally, but 'You Need to be Prepared to do Things by Yourself,' Says Security Head," *Jerusalem Post*, 9 June 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1541634105?accountid=28992>, 2.

<sup>198</sup> Liad Porat, *The Muslim Brotherhood and Egypt-Israel Peace* (Ramat Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, 2014), 15.

<sup>199</sup> David Kirkpatrick, "Arab Leaders, Viewing Hamas as Worse Than Israel, Stay Silent," *The New York Times*, 30 July 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/31/world/middleeast/fighting-political-islam-arab-states-find-themselves-allied-with-israel.html>.

A related component to the unique context in the 2014 war was the rise of the Islamic State. The danger of fundamentalist terror organizations waxed more apparent to the global community giving Israel an unusual respite from the chorus of European Union voices against Israeli action in Gaza.<sup>200</sup>

Already under duress by Egyptian regime change, Hamas had also become estranged from its usual supporters in Syria and Iran.<sup>201</sup> Its funding sources ran dry and salaries went unpaid. Seeking to redress its isolation, Hamas even went to the PA hat in hand, entering into a reconciliation agreement with its bitter rival from a position of weakness.<sup>202</sup> And even this dissolved after Hamas claimed credit for the 12 June kidnapping.

Desperate financial circumstances and Hamas' failure to exert control over its auxiliaries set it on the path to another armed conflict with Israel. After the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish adolescents on 12 June 2014, rockets fired into Israel as security forces made arrests in West Bank, and the reprisal murder by Jewish extremists on 2 July, both sides seemed unable to avoid a conflict that would change the status quo.<sup>203</sup>

#### *Shaping Perception and Conditions for Future Advantage*

For the Israelis the war objectives, though similar to previous bouts with Hamas, had introduced subtle changes. Stopping or slowing rocket fire to an acceptable rate remained the

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<sup>200</sup> Gabi Saboni, "Operation Cast Lead, Pillar of Defense, and Protective Edge: A Comparative Review," in *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge*, 34.

<sup>201</sup> Harel Chorev and Yvette Shumacher, "The Road to Operation Protective Edge: Gaps in Strategic Perception," *Israel Journal of Foreign Affairs* 8, no. 3 (2014): 9-24, 10.

<sup>202</sup> *BBC*, "Hamas and Fatah Unveil Reconciliation Deal," 23 April 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27128902>.

<sup>203</sup> High Level Military Group, *An Assessment of the 2014 Gaza Conflict*, 30.

most important. Destroying the tunnel network emerged to become a major objective as well. The strengthening of long-term deterrence remained an unstated objective. Interested in more than enhancing its martial image, the IDF and Israel went to great lengths to shape post-war perceptions. Arguably, one of the IDF's main objectives coming out of Operation Protective Edge was legitimacy among the regional and global audiences.<sup>204</sup> The IDF came to realize that long after the campaign had ceased, it would be fighting for this objective, and acquitted itself well, despite ferocious opposition.

Some doubt remains if Hamas fulfilled a prepared strategic goal of provoking a war with Israel to improve its own isolated posture or if the fractious and fragile nature of power in Palestinian politics caused them to stumble into the conflict.<sup>205</sup> Either way, it seems that Hamas' objective was to ensure the survival of its regime by relieving its fiscal duress.<sup>206</sup>

#### *Old Battlefield, New Reality: The Tunnel War*

Israeli operations unfolded in three phases. The operation began as an air campaign meant to utilize standoff to attrit Hamas leadership, rocket teams, and fighters inflicting severe enough punishment that Hamas would accept ceasefire. Lacking the surprise of the 2008 Operation Cast Lead, these targets proved fleeting and success was limited.<sup>207</sup> Moreover, several Hamas incursions into Israeli territory through offensive tunnels made clear that Iron Dome and air strikes were insufficient to change the security reality. A second phase involving ground

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<sup>204</sup> High Level Military Group, *An Assessment of the 2014 Gaza Conflict*, 32.

<sup>205</sup> Chorev and Schumacher, 13.

<sup>206</sup> High Level Military Group, *An Assessment of the 2014 Gaza Conflict*, 30.

<sup>207</sup> Eitan Shamir and Eado Hecht, "Gaza 2014: Israeli's Attrition vs Hamas Exhaustion," *Parameters* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2014-15): 84.

operations emerged as necessary.<sup>208</sup> From 17 July to 4 August 2014, the IDF conducted a limited ground offensive to locate and destroy tunnel entrances. IDF forces limited the attack to a three-kilometer zone around the perimeter of Gaza to avoid going deep into the Gaza City and to keep the operation focused on the tunnels, which crossed into Israel.<sup>209</sup> Simultaneously air strikes continued to disrupt Hamas forces from maneuvering against the ground effort and to challenge rocket and mortar teams still firing into Israel. Unlike Operation Cast Lead, which achieved operational surprise and permitted the IDF a greater measure of initiative the IDF essentially conducted search and attack operations during the ground operation. Because this yielded some surprise to Hamas, its fighters were able to acquit themselves somewhat better than previous conflicts. They inflicted sixty-six casualties, frequently by exploiting its tunnel network and wearing captured IDF uniforms, and hiding among the populace.<sup>210</sup> Satisfied it had achieved all that was possible by ground forces, the IDF withdrew on 5 August after locating or destroying thirty-two tunnels.<sup>211</sup> A third phase of continued air strikes and standoff attacks lasted until late August. During this period, the IDF tried to strike a careful balance between punishing Hamas enough to end the conflict and avoiding the total collapse of the Hamas regime.<sup>212</sup> The 26 August

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<sup>208</sup> Shamir and Hecht, 86.

<sup>209</sup> Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs-commissioned Gaza Conflict Task Force, *2014 Gaza War Assessment: The New Face of Conflict* (Washington, DC: Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, March 2015), accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.jinsa.org/gaza-assessment>, 26.

<sup>210</sup> BBC “Gaza Crisis: Toll of Operations,” 1 September 2014, accessed 6 April 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28439404>.

<sup>211</sup> Daniel Rubenstein, “Hamas’ Tunnel Network: A Massacre in the Making,” in *The Gaza War 2014: The War Israel Did Not Want and the Disaster it Averted*, 127.

<sup>212</sup> Eitan Shamir, “Rethinking Operation Protective Edge,” *Middle East Quarterly* (Spring 2015): 3, accessed 2 April 2016, <http://www.meforum.org/5084/rethinking-operation-protective-edge>.

ceasefire that finally held was identical to that of the 15 July, which Hamas had rejected. The reason for the change of heart remains unclear but attrition of Hamas forces and a loss of confidence in mobilizing regional sympathy in its favor seem likely factors.<sup>213</sup>

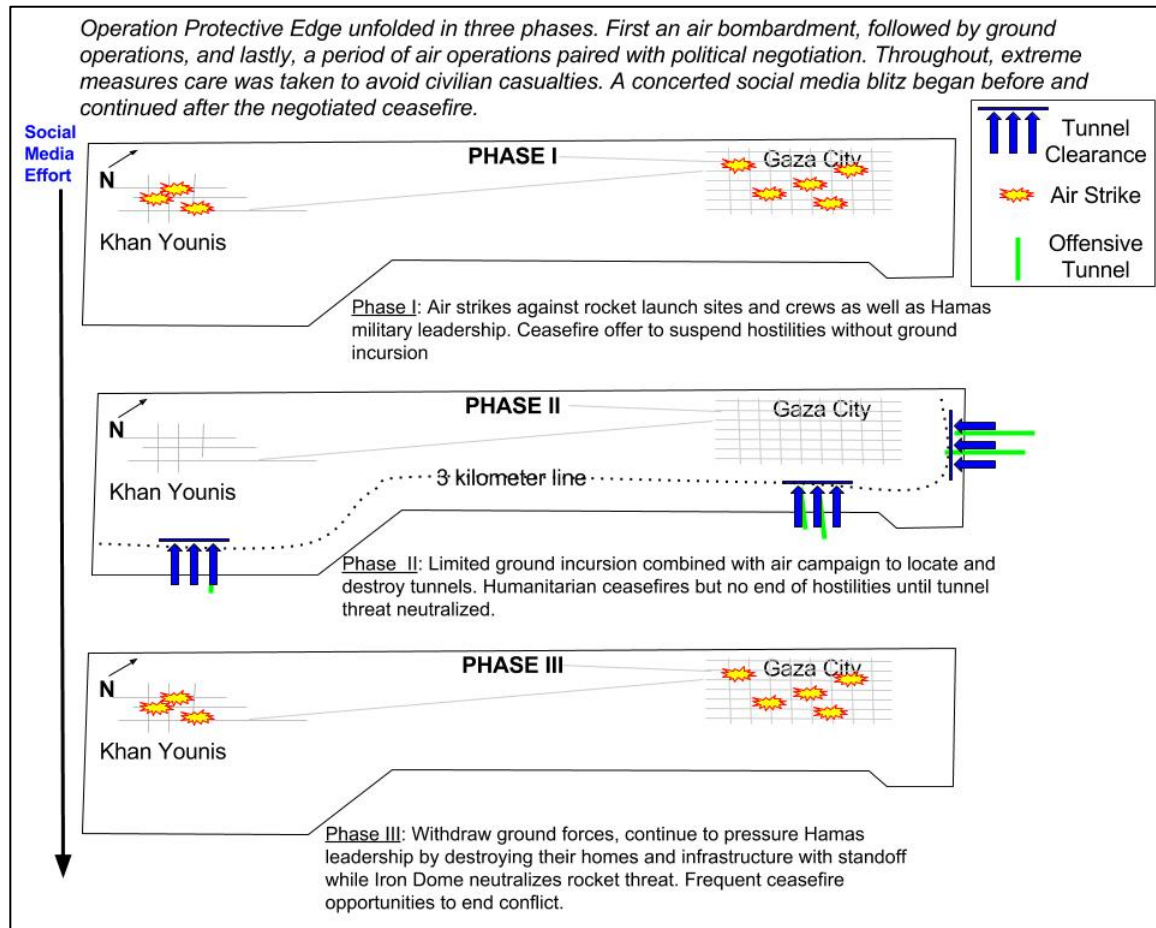


Figure 4. Protective Edge Operational Approach

Source: Created by author.

### *Hamas Learns to Reorganize Space*

The Israelis had hoped to avoid a ground incursion late in Operation Protective Edge. Unlike Operation Cast Lead, whose purpose was as much to demonstrate renewed competence as

<sup>213</sup> Shamir and Hecht, 87.



it was to punish and disrupt Hamas, Protective Edge envisaged an operation like Pillar of Defense, which successfully attrited rocket crews and Hamas fighters through a brief air campaign alone.<sup>214</sup> What the IDF found instead, was that the enemy had learned how to reshape the urban environment as well, and to great effect.

While the IDF had some sense of Hamas' ongoing tunneling, the prospects of their use as offensive avenues of approach appeared dim. However, after thwarting multiple attempted incursions, some by sea, and more alarmingly some by tunnel, the IDF quickly adapted itself to a different reality.<sup>215</sup> The Hamas offensive tunnel network represented a reorganization of physical space and an underappreciated threat to Israeli settlements and to the IDF attempting to locate and destroy the tunnels. Hamas had very cleverly expanded the physical dimensions with which the IDF had to worry. Not only did this challenge the IDF's tactics and technological edge, but it penetrated the psychological domain as well, playing on Israel concern for kidnapped IDF soldiers.<sup>216</sup> Particularly sensitive to this possibility, the IDF went as far as to develop controversial policies about use of force when an IDF soldier has been captured.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Udi Dekel, "Operation Protective Edge: Strategic and Tactical Asymmetry," in *The Lessons of Operation Protective Edge*, 14.

<sup>215</sup> Herb Keinon and Yakov Lappin, "IDF starts Gaza ground offensive," *Jerusalem Post*, 17 July 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/IDF-intensifies-Gaza-attacks-with-artillery-fire-air-strikes-363289>.

<sup>216</sup> William Booth, "Here's What Really Happened in the Gaza War," *Washington Post*, 4 September 2014, interview with an IDF intelligence Officer, accessed 30 March 2016, <https://lumen.cgsccarl.com/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/docview/1560419610?accountid=28992>.

<sup>217</sup> Anshel Pfeffer, "The Hannibal Directive: Why Israel Risks the Life of the Soldier Being Rescued," *Ha'aretz*, 3 August 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/premium-1.608693>.

Upon realizing the extent of the Hamas tunnel threat, the IDF set modest and specific objectives for the ground campaign. Their attitude towards the physical terrain in this case reflected a realization that Hamas too had learned to redefine and manipulate physical space. The necessary task of gaining understanding of the cartography of Hamas' hidden tunnels would take time and obviate any chance of a rapid advance. Gaza had become, "an entire city on top of a city."<sup>218</sup> As such, the IDF determined to create time and space around the three-kilometer periphery of Gaza while engineers and infantry sniffed out tunnels and destroyed them.

### *Gaining Initiative in the Intangible Domain*

The most impressive aspect of Protective Edge must be the Israeli commitment to shaping perception of the conflict. In this regard, the IDF attacked perception as a strategic objective and acquitted themselves well. Ceding the advantage of tactical surprise, the IDF began its social media offensive before hostilities, and continue it up to the present. The clearest sign that the IDF took the war of perceptions seriously is the still functional IDF blog and website dedicated to Operation Protective Edge.<sup>219</sup> Videos depicting rocket fire from protected sites and stories reporting Hamas official policy of human shield use contested the Hamas narrative with vim and veracity.<sup>220</sup> To enhance its image as a humane military force the IDF advertised its roof-

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<sup>218</sup> Barabara Opall-Rome, "Interview: Maj. General Guy Zir, Israeli Forces Ground Command," *Defense News*, 29 October 2015, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/leaders/interviews/2015/10/29/interview-maj-gen-guy-zur-israel-ground-forces-command/74801140/>.

<sup>219</sup> Israel Defense Forces, "Special Report: Operation Protective Edge," *Protective Edge Blog*, accessed 30 March 2016, <https://www.idfblog.com/operationgaza2014/>.

<sup>220</sup> Lahav Harkov, "Gaza Reporters' tweets: Hamas using human shields," *Jerusalem Post*, 24 July 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Gaza-reporters-tweets-Hamas-using-human-shields-368689>; Jonah Jeremy, "Will captured Hamas manual on using human shields help block war crimes trials?" *Jerusalem Post*, 5 August

knocking technique and cell phone warnings. The site remains active and the IDF continue to sponsor and support research probes into the operation spawning a number of studies on the still recent conflict. Indeed, the IDF invited independent commissions of foreign military professionals to investigate and present their findings on their operations in protective edge. Such independent panels composed of officers from European, Asian, and North American nations lent credibility to the claim that “no one expends more effort to avoid civilian casualties than the IDF.”<sup>221</sup> The perception offensive effectively dampened the effects of Hamas and non-governmental organizations’ efforts to depict IDF actions as unlawful. Operation Protective Edge did not suffer the Goldstone Effect.

Appreciating the pattern of previous conflicts Israeli high officials and IDF officers seamlessly transitioned into a different phase of the same campaign, pursuing it with no less vigor than combat operations.<sup>222</sup> Facebook trends like “Support the IDF” tapped a groundswell of Israeli and non-Israeli support in response to perceived bias in United Nations Human Rights Council reporting.<sup>223</sup> Some audiences were beyond convincing, but the IDF had achieved as a

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2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Will-captured-Hamas-manual-on-using-human-shields-help-Israel-block-war-crimes-trials-370154>.

<sup>221</sup> Richard Kemp, “Gaza’s Civilian Casualties: The Truth is Very Different,” 3 August 2014, Gatestone Institute, International Policy Council, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4570/gaza-civilian-casualties>; Pew Research Center, “More Express Sympathy for Israel than the Palestinians: Many Have Some Sympathy for Both Sides in Middle East Conflict,” 28 August 2014, accessed 31 March 2016, <http://www.people-press.org/2014/08/28/more-express-sympathy-for-israel-than-the-palestinians/>.

<sup>222</sup> Herb Keinon, “The diplomatic war begins,” *Jerusalem Post*, 6 August 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Operation-Protective-Edge/Analysis-The-diplomatic-war-begins-370183>.

<sup>223</sup> Ro Yeger, “Trending on Facebook: Support the IDF,” *Jerusalem Post*, 23 June 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Arab-Israeli-Conflict/Trending-on-Facebook-Support-the-IDF-406890>.

good a result as expected even earning calls from several European Union leaders to disarm Gaza-based terror groups, a step few had been willing to take after previous conflicts.<sup>224</sup> Without a doubt, the IDF demonstrated a more highly developed understanding of the strategic effects of perception.

### *Validating an Operations Process*

Much of the problem solving approach continued as it had during Cast Lead, and like Operation Cast Lead, decentralized decision-making and execution defined the IDF operations process.<sup>225</sup> Although originally envisioned as strictly an air campaign, the realization that Hamas' tunnels now offered an offensive capability caused the Israeli high command to reframe the situation. With a new primary goal of finding and destroying offensive tunnels, the IDF executed a search and attack operation, and by necessity assumed a decentralized problem-solving approach. The IDF also continued to put a premium on learning in combat. During Protective Edge, this was an absolutely essential quality since the IDF had not understood or planned for tunnel fighting until after the fighting began. Since the IDF enjoyed the benefit of a now institutionalized apparatus for detecting changes in enemy methods, determining responses, and disseminating to forces across the front, it could outrun Hamas' adaptation cycle.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Siboni, 34.

<sup>225</sup> Shamir, "Rethinking Operation Protective Edge," 7.

<sup>226</sup> Amos Harel, "With the Troops in the Strip, In Gaza Israel's Facebook generation fights well," *Haaretz*, 26 July 2014, accessed 30 March 2016, <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.607320>; *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, "Israeli Combat Battalions to Get Real-Time Instructors during Battle."

### **Themes, Trends, and Patterns in the Israeli Experience**

Having evaluated the siege of Beirut, Operation Cast Lead, and Operation Protective Edge, it remains to connect them and trace the thematic trajectory of the IDF's experience with urban warfare since Operation Peace for Galilee. In doing so, one can begin to see more general patterns that explain the evolution of IDF operational art in urban warfare and how it arrived at its current state.

The Israelis trended towards an increasingly nuanced understanding of how to manipulate the physical structure of a city; creating or destroying space, altering its flow, or changing its rules. During the siege of Beirut, the IDF took a rather traditional view of the city, treating it as a citadel, and besieging it as armies have since antiquity.<sup>227</sup> Embarking on Operation Cast Lead, the IDF evolved to see the city as something living, fashioning themselves as surgeons and the city as a patient. In this regard, they could anesthetize it and avoid damaging certain organs, while excising others.<sup>228</sup> Finally, during Operation Protective Edge, the IDF realized they were not the only force able to reshape the urban battlefield. Their adversaries could and did manipulate the environment to create an entirely new and unexpected subterranean infrastructure.<sup>229</sup> Perhaps more than any other development, this underscores the accelerated cycle of learning and adaptation that occurs in urban warfare.

The intangible domain loomed larger and larger in the IDF planning process until it reached equal importance with physical combat, and found the two well integrated. During Operation Peace for Galilee, the IDF often viewed the press with hostility and failed to emit convincing signals of their operation's legitimacy. The PLO, by contrast, had handpicked

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<sup>227</sup> Dupuy and Martell, 155, 159-160.

<sup>228</sup> Cordesman, 40.

<sup>229</sup> Shamir and Hecht, 86.

reporters in their midst and dominated the battle for perception.<sup>230</sup> Rather, the Israeli government and the IDF viewed the intangible domain as an auxiliary and relatively unimportant effort. At best, the IDF used it to increase the psychological strain on the PLO and to convince them of the futility of their effort. In the main, the IDF treated this as a tactical measure. Operation Cast Lead marked an improvement in IDF appreciation for the intangible domain. Still, it struggled to promote these practices. If the IDF held its own during the war, it was the ongoing battle of narrative afterward, which did the most damage.<sup>231</sup> The progress it had made went unnoticed as the inflammatory (and later debunked) Goldstone Report struck a chord with many audiences. By Operation Protective Edge, the IDF had gained a full appreciation for its various audiences, whom it might persuade, and how best to do so. The IDF further realized that in the intangible domain, the war began before and did not end until long after the shooting. It mounted aggressive and persistent efforts to contest Hamas and its allies and seems to have met with more success than it has in previous urban campaigns.<sup>232</sup>

The IDF operations process seemed to trend towards decentralized problem solving, although not without difficulties along the way. During the siege for Beirut, the authority for decisions seemed concentrated in the person of Ariel Sharon, and perhaps to a lesser extent, Raphael Eitan.<sup>233</sup> Given the situation, this was probably sensible. Specific tactical actions had direct input into negotiation and the strategic outcome produced. However, this proved to be a

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<sup>230</sup> Gabriel, *Operation Peace for Galilee*, 136.

<sup>231</sup> Richard Goldstone, "Reconsidering the Goldstone Report on Israel and War Crimes," *The Washington Post*, 1 April 2011, accessed 30 March 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reconsidering-the-goldstone-report-on-israel-and-war-crimes/2011/04/01/AFg111JC_story.html).

<sup>232</sup> Saboni, 34.

<sup>233</sup> Davis, 77; Dupuy and Martell, 151-152.

stumbling block in the 2006 Lebanon War, a problem the IDF senior command determined to correct.<sup>234</sup> Operation Cast Lead marked the triumphant return of small unit leadership and decentralized decision-making. By Operation Protective Edge, the IDF institutionalized the idea of learning in combat, realizing that it could not wait for the interwar period to capture and disseminate lessons learned.<sup>235</sup>

The meta-pattern reveals that most dramatic change occurred in the wake of conflicts whose character the IDF had not expected.<sup>236</sup> Education and institutional reforms during these periods did alter the course of the IDF's thought, but did not produce uniform results. Some methods fell out of favor and others became victims of political feuding and posturing. The Israeli affinity for individual thought and intuition-based adaptation dampened the effectiveness of IDF institutional reform.<sup>237</sup> A mosaic of institutional education, lessons learned and experience based learning have driven the IDF's process of adaptation in fits and starts. While much of the post-modern language fell out the IDF vocabulary, the creative spirit it imbued grew more evident over time.<sup>238</sup> Israeli combat leaders eschew traditional approaches and creatively respond to the challenges of urban warfare.<sup>239</sup> They have grown more attuned to the connection between

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<sup>234</sup> Kober, "The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War," 19.

<sup>235</sup> *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, "Israeli Combat Battalions to Get Real-Time Instructors during Battle."

<sup>236</sup> Kober, "The Rise and Fall of Israeli Operational Art, 1948-2008," 166, 167. After the First Intifada, Operational Theory Research Institute and other institutions spawned to respond to the unfamiliar problem of asymmetric and urban conflict. The again, after a disappointing performance in the 2006 Lebanon War resulted in self-criticism and fresh leadership to reform the IDF.

<sup>237</sup> Kober, "What Happened to Israeli Military Thought?" 723.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 720.

<sup>239</sup> Shamir, *Transforming Command*, 178.

strategic outcomes and those intangible but all too evident domains of conflict. Military deception, psychological operations, lawfare, social media, and cyber conflict all figure into planning as equals, rather than subordinates of the ground maneuver plan.<sup>240</sup> The IDF operations process grew well suited to the fragmenting effect of urban centers, unifying operations by purpose yet allowing decentralized execution and recognizing the importance of learning in combat.

### **Conclusion: Around the Walls of Jericho**

The IDF learned through its own series of crucibles from 1982 to the present. The IDF came to understand physical space in the urban environment as moldable. Enterprising Israeli commanders found that both they and the enemy had the power to reshape the physical environment at will, subverting the normal order of an urban space to suit operational needs. At the same time, the IDF came to realize that the intangible domain, where news outlets, non-governmental organizations, Facebook, and the human psyche exist, an equally important campaign unfolds. To function in both the physical and non-physical conflict, the IDF found that an operations process must allow localized action by small units, provide unifying logic for decision-making, and enable learning during operations.

It might seem that these findings apply to any operating environment, urban or not and in a broad sense, that is true. However, the malleability and dynamism of urban space make it a unique laboratory for human conflict. Here, more than other battlefields, the intensity, and speed of change in human conflict challenge cognition from the rifleman on the street to the general

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<sup>240</sup> Amos Yadlin, “The Strategic Balance of Operation Protective Edge,” in *The Lessons of Protective Edge*, 200, 209-210; Alan Baker, “The Legal War,” in *The Gaza War 2014: The War Israel Did Not Want and the Disaster it Averted*, 61-62; Daniel Cohen and Danielle Levin, “Operation Protective Edge: The Cyber Defense Perspective,” in *The Lessons of Protective Edge*, 61; Danielle Ziri, “On the Social Media Battlefield, Israel is not Necessarily Losing, Says NGO,” *Jerusalem Post*, 26 November 2015, accessed 6 April 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Diaspora/On-the-social-media-battlefield-Israel-is-not-necessarily-losing-435403>.



officer leaning over a map. For this reason, much scholarship views urban warfare with despair. No doubt, most military professionals would avoid it, if possible. For precisely this reason, the enemies of Israel as well as other western armies will continue to fight from urban centers. Asymmetric adversaries have too much to gain by exploiting the sanctuary of dense cities, the morality of professional western armies, and the ability to broadcast their narrative to the world. This need not trouble the professional. The Israeli experience proves that a western style military can succeed against urban guerillas and terrorists, though it might not have the immediate and rewarding sensation of decisive victory.

### Crossing the Jordan

Seven times Joshua and the Israelites circled the walls of Jericho. Each time, they had better understanding of the objective than before, and each time must have sowed deeper confusion and dread among the defenders who wondered when the assault would come. Against the estimated 500 defenders, the Israelites could have battered the gates down or used scaling ladders to climb the walls.<sup>241</sup> Joshua chose a different approach, perhaps to husband his strength or perhaps to strengthen the narrative that Yahweh's power would help deliver them. In either case, Joshua illustrates that by guile and imaginative approaches, flesh may overcome stone.

The modern city no longer has siege walls to protect it, yet in some ways remains as difficult to penetrate as an ancient walled city. Political or physical boundaries do not contain the whole of an urban space. It also inhabits the halls of cyberspace, twitter feeds, and human minds. Still, the idea of a city must also relate to geospatial reality, where real humans live, work, fight, and die. The Israeli experience, both in biblical times and in the present, shows that a military

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<sup>241</sup> Gabriel, *The Military History of Ancient Israel*, 131.

must confront both the tactile and the intangible and it must develop a functional operations process that enables logically consistent response to both.

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